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Salutogenesis in Action: a nature based 'mindfulness for health and wellbeing' programme and its impact on daily life

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Lancaster University

2018

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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(abstract, acknowledgements, references and

administration documentation - Appendix H not included in word count)

I declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted in substantially the same form for the award of a higher degree elsewhere.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Johnson', is centered on the page. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'S' and a trailing 'm'.

Stephen Johnson BSc(Hons), MSc.

13 March 2018

Abstract

This research asks whether a focus on nature enables participants on a mindfulness programme to better assimilate mindfulness practice into their daily lives with resultant improvement in health and wellbeing, greater resilience and a more successful approach to their self-management of chronic illness. In doing so it has implications for approaches to healthcare delivery in the management of chronic conditions as well as the teaching and practice of other mindfulness approaches and similar therapeutic interventions. Improvements in participant health and wellbeing, particularly the impact on self-efficacy, the belief that the integration of mindfulness into their lives, their building of a regular practice, helps manage their health conditions and improve their sense of wellbeing, form a key element in the ‘sense of coherence’ that is the mainstay of the Salutogenic approach to health and wellbeing (Antonovsky, 1979).

More than 15 million people in the UK live with chronic illness, accounting for more than 50% of all visits to general practitioners and 70% of hospital inpatient stays. This accounts for 70% of the NHS primary and acute care budget and yet it is felt that 70 - 80% of cases could be supported to manage their own conditions with mindfulness based approaches providing a low cost, long term form of such support.

Although the separate fields of mindfulness, nature connection and chronic illness have each received attention in the academic literature, little academic research has examined the conjunction of these fields. This thesis builds bridges between the three

areas. A research bricolage is constructed which follows participants with diverse backgrounds and chronic health conditions as they engage in a nature based mindfulness programme and subsequent follow-up over 12 months. These case studies are documented by participants using a variety of media and explored through a interpretative phenomenological lens.

The study found that a nature focus did help participants incorporate mindfulness practice into their daily lives with resultant benefits in the management of their conditions and their perceived wellbeing. However it also highlighted barriers to successful integration including the impact of family support and ongoing medical interventions. In doing so it contributes to the teaching of mindfulness, providing new ways of engaging participants and a route to its improved integration in daily life. It provides insights into the difficulties faced by those learning mindfulness and leads to greater self efficacy in the management of chronic illnesses. A Nature Based Mindfulness Approach to health can improve self management while reducing health care costs in populations with diverse chronic illnesses (418 Words).

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Contents

Abstract.....	iii
Acknowledgements.....	v
List of Figures.....	xii
List of Tables	xiii
Glossary of acronyms	xv
Volume 1	
Introduction, Review of Literature and the main concepts underpinning the thesis	1
Health, Nature and Mindfulness:	
Coming to our senses	
Chapter 1 - Focus of this research.....	2
1.1 Introduction.....	2
1.2 The Challenge	3
1.2 The research	6
1.2.1 The Research Question	6
1.3 Society in the 21st Century: A contextual twist.....	9
1.4 Stimulus for this research.....	11
1.5 Structure of the Thesis	15
1.6 Importance of this Research.....	17
1.7 Summary	19
Chapter 2 – Health and Wellbeing in the 21st century: responding mindfully.....	21
2.1 Chapter Overview	21
2.2 Physical Health	22
2.2.1 Social Issues.....	22
2.2.2 Chronic Illness and Pain	24
2.3 Mental Health.....	27
2.4 Self-Management.....	38
2.5 Salutogenesis.....	46
2.6 On Mindfulness, Buddhist roots and modern applications.....	48
2.6.1 Overview	48
2.6.2 Introduction.....	49
2.6.2 Understanding mindfulness	51
2.6.4 Mindfulness Based Interventions or Approaches (MBI or MBA).....	70
2.7 Summary	73
Chapter 3 - Nature, Therapeutic Connections	74

3.1 Chapter Overview	74
3.2 Introduction.....	75
3.3 Cultural Influences.....	79
3.4 Environmental Issues	86
3.5 Nature Based Therapeutic Modalities.....	89
3.5.1 International Perspective.....	90
3.5.2 Outdoor Therapy	91
3.5.3 Attention Restoration Therapy	94
3.5.4 Ecopsychology	97
3.5.4.1 Ecotherapy	99
3.5.5 Shinrin - Yoku	101
3.5.6 Issues around nature based therapies	103
3.6 Summary	104
Chapter 4 - Coming to Our Senses: daily life, chaos and complexity	105
4.1 Chapter Overview	105
4.2 Introduction.....	106
4.3 What could go wrong?	109
4.4 chaos, complexity and daily life	112
4.5 Moving into the research study.....	113
Volume 2	
The methodological approach and the research itself including discussion and outcomes	114
The Journey: Finding a path, experiences and destination	
Chapter 5 - Methodology, finding a path	115
5.1 Chapter Overview	115
5.2 Making choices	116
5.3 The Bricolage.....	120
Chapter 6 - Constructing the Bricolage: the pieces come together	123
6.1 Introduction.....	123
6.2 Pilot Study.....	124
6.2.1 Sense Awareness Inventory.....	127
6.2.2 The Compass Rose.....	129
6.3 The Bricolage: pieces are assembled	131
6.4 Approaches to selection	134
6.4.1 Selection Summary	139

6.5 Meeting Participants	140
6.6 Method of delivery	142
6.7 Degree of Structure	144
6.8 Use of Journals.....	148
6.9 Other Issues	150
6.10 Discussion	152
6.11 The Delivered Programme	154
6.11.1 Initial Meeting.....	154
6.11.2 The Tuition Stage	155
6.11.3 Follow up Stage	156
6.11.4 Final Meeting	156
6.12 Summary	158
Chapter 7 - The Journeymen.....	159
7.1 Chapter overview	159
7.2 Introduction.....	160
7.3 Case study - Participant ID - David	162
7.3.1 The Journeyman.....	162
7.3.3 Further Discussion	164
7.4 Case Study – Participant ID - Crash	167
7.4.2 Discussion	167
7.5 Case Study - Participant ID - Greta	171
7.5.1 Early connections.....	171
7.5.2 Becoming a journeyman	172
7.5.3 Discussion	173
7.6 Case Study - participant ID - Maggie	177
7.6.1 A journey - but end not in sight.....	178
7.7 Case Study - Participant ID - April	182
7.7.1 Becoming a journeyman	182
7.8 Case study - participant ID - Barbara	190
7.9 Summary	194
Chapter 8 - Discussion.....	195
8.1 Introduction.....	195
8.1.1. What we share	195
8.1.2 Data Analysis	195
8.1.3. Thoughts on themes	199

8.2 Identifying how individuals engage with their natural environment.....	202
8.2.1 Nature and childhood.....	202
8.2.2 Engaging through Sense Awareness and a ‘Sit Spot’.....	204
8.3 Nature Based Mindfulness Approaches in practice.....	209
8.4 Nature Based Mindfulness Approaches: Identifying the benefits.....	213
8.4.2 Community Engagement.....	213
8.4.2 Health and Social Care.....	215
8.5 Summary.....	217
Chapter 9 - Conclusion.....	218
9.1 Background.....	218
9.2 Becoming Radical.....	220
9.3 Answering the research question.....	222
9.3.1 The answer is in the detail.....	222
9.4 A few final words from the research study participants.....	229
9.5 Recommendations for practitioners / teachers / therapists.....	232
9.6 The Significant and Original Contribution to Knowledge.....	233
9.7 Suggestions for future research.....	236
9.8 Taking the research forward.....	238
9.9 Summary.....	240
References.....	242
Volume 3	
Appendices	
Appendices.....	292
Appendix A - presentations, publications and posters.....	293
A.1 Presentations.....	293
A.2 Publications.....	294
A.3 Poster presentations.....	295
Appendix B - Extracts from personal journals.....	296
B.1 Extracts from David’s Journal.....	297
B.2 Greta’s journal - a reflection on integration.....	304
B.2.1 Overview.....	304
B.3 Steve’s Journal (extract).....	311
B.4 April’s Journal.....	320
B.5 Barbara’s journal (abridged version).....	330
B.6 Sample Journal Pages.....	340

B 5.1 Barbara’s journal sample pages.....	340
B 5.1.1 September page	340
5.1.2 Reflecting on photographs	341
B. 5.1.3 Photocollage	342
B 5.2 April’s journal sample pages	343
B 5.2.1 6th May journal entry	343
B 5.2.2 4th June journal entry	344
Appendix C - Interview transcripts.....	345
C.1 - Meg Interview	346
C.2 - April Interview	364
C.3 - Greta Interview	376
C.4 - Crash Interview	398
Appendix D - Reflection and Discussion.....	407
D.1 - Sample Daily Journal Greta.....	408
D.2 - Sample Daily Journal Maggie	409
D.3 - Sample Daily Journal Barbara	410
D.4 - Greta and Maggie Discussion.....	411
D.5 - Images of sit spots	421
D.5.1 Looking towards the Coniston Fells	421
D.5.2 Canal Foot.....	421
D.5.3 Overlooking Tarn Hows	422
D.5.4 Looking towards Holy Island.....	422
D.5.5 Sit spot near Milnthorpe.....	423
D.5.6 A smaller sit spot, the back yard	423
Appendix E1 - Standard Mindfulness For Health (MFH) Course Key Concepts	424
Appendix E2 - UK Mindfulness Teacher Guidelines	425
E.1.1 Mindfulness Based Teacher Training	425
E.1.2 Requirements in addition to mindfulness-based teacher training.....	425
E.1.3 Ongoing Good Practice Requirements	426
Appendix F - John Muir Award	427
Appendix G1 - Sample Pilot Study Questionnaires.....	428
G.1.1 Sample Connectedness to Nature Scale Questionnaire.....	428
G.1.2 Sample 5-Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire	429
Appendix G2 - Nature Based Mindfulness Approach Compass.....	431
Appendix H - Administrative documentation	439

H.1 Consent Form.....	440
H.2 Research Project - Participant Information Sheet	441
H.3 Copy of Project Ethical Clearance Consent.....	444

List of Figures

List of figures		
figure	description	page
1	View of Cumbrian Fells, Using the senses	12
2	Mental Health spectrum	30
3	Ladder of Intervention	42
4	Spiral path of self-management	44
5	Mindfulness Training - shifting mode of self-focus	66
6	Drivers of disconnection from nature	78
7	Maintaining nature connection - this land is your land	80
8	Scope of outdoor therapy	92
9	Scale of intervention	92
10	Integration of Ecopsychology	100
11	The Compass Rose	130
12	Framework for integrated methods	133
13	Expansion of framework	134
14	Easedale Tarn	185
15	Reflection on thought processes	188
16	Fine tuning senses	205
17	Root and Branch Practice Themes	151
18	Integration of Practices	235

List of Tables

List of Tables		
Table	description	page
1	Four foundations of mindfulness	13
2	Five Ways to Wellbeing	32
3	Selection of verses from the chapter on mind in the Dhammapada	53
4	The Bramha Viharas or sublime states	58
5	The Eightfold Path	60
6	Nature definitions	76
7	Indicators of inspirational landscapes	81
8	Key factors of Attention Restoration Therapy (ART)	96
9	Stages of a Vision Quest	106
10	Reasons for programme failure	109
11	Five Hindrances	111
12	Comparison of Methodologies	117
13	Four criteria for achieving rigour in qualitative research	122
14	Sample sense awareness inventory responses	128
15	Criteria used for first stage of participant selection	135
16	Participant characteristics	138
17	Main venues used	140
18	Additional elements of nature based mindfulness programme	142
19	Advantages of low degree of structure	146
20	Themes from David's journey	166
21	Themes from Crash's journey	170
22	Themes from Greta's journey	176
23	Themes from Maggie's journey	181
24	Themes from April's journey	189
25	Themes from Barbara's journey	193
26	Main themes identified	197

27	Common Themes amongst Participants	198
28	Practices regularly used by participants	212
29	Engaging with communities	214
30	Nature based practice themes	228
31	Table of Appendices	289

Glossary of acronyms

ADHD	Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder
BCR	Benefit Cost Ratio
CBT	Cognitive Behavioural Therapy
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
CwN	Connectedness with Nature
DALY	Disability affected life year
FFMQ	Five Facets of Mindfulness Questionnaire
MBA	Mindfulness based approach(es)
MBCT	Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy
MBI	Mindfulness based interventions
MBPM	Mindfulness Based Pain Management
MBSR	Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction
MNE	Meaningful Nature Experience
NaHS	Natural Health Service
NBMA	Nature Based Mindfulness Approach
NEF	New Economics Foundation
NHS	National Health Service
NICE	National Institute for Health and Care Excellence
NIH	National Institutes of Health
NOLS	National Outdoor Leadership School
OE	Outdoor Education
QALY	Quality Adjusted Life Year
QOL	Quality of Life
RCT	Randomised Control Trial
SAI	Sense Awareness Inventory
TaMHS	Targeted Mental Health in Schools
UN	United Nations
WHO	World Health Organisation

Volume 1

**Introduction, Review of Literature and the
main concepts underpinning the thesis**

**Health, Nature and Mindfulness:
Coming to our senses**

Chapter 1 - Focus of this research

1.1 Introduction

When J. Arthur Thompson, Regus Professor of Zoology at the University of Aberdeen addressed the Annual Meeting of the British Medical Association in 1914, he drew attention to the healing power of nature - Vis Medicatrix Naturea (Thompson, 1914).

“What then do I mean by the healing power of Nature? I mean to refer to the way in which Nature ministers to our minds, all more or less diseased by the rush and racket of civilisation, and helps to steady and enrich our lives... That the healing power of nature is also that associated with mindful contact with the animate and inanimate natural portions of the outdoor environment”

Over a 100 years on from Vis Medicatrix Naturea we continue to face the ‘rush and racket of civilisation’ and its damaging effects. The last thirty years has seen wider recognition that those living with such ‘rush and racket’ especially in our ever increasing built up areas, where there may be little access to green or open spaces (Lewis & Booth, 1994), have a higher prevalence of physical and psychological disorders than those with such access or those living in rural areas (Greenway, 1995; Shaw, 2006; Shanahan et al., 2015). So it seems we are failing to steady and enrich our lives with nature’s healing power.

1.2 The Challenge

Arguably, despite Thompson's address and the growing research since, we are moving further away from such healing power. Changing economic factors can contribute to a disconnection from nature, with future employment and cost of housing being seen as responsible not only for a migration of young people to cities (Brueckner & Lall, 2014) but for increased deprivation, increased suicide rates in rural areas and loss of community cohesion where financial and other constraints are overcoming the benefits of the 'rural idyll' and wider exposure to nature (Yipa et al., 2000; Gkartziros & Ziebarth., 2016; UNICEF, 2017).

At the same time urban areas especially those affected by deprivation are becoming oases of declining health, with obesity, diabetes and coronary heart disease becoming more prevalent (Bruyns, 2010; WHO, 2010; Wolch, Byrne, & Newel., 2014). In fact such non-communicable diseases (NCDs) are becoming the leading cause of death in the world today, and are on track to have risen by 15% between 2004 and 2020 (WHO, 2009a; Mokdad, 2016).

This rise can be seen as demonstrating the mismatch between the way we live and the way our bodies and minds have evolved, the limits on our capacity to respond and adapt to our modern lifestyles. In addition there are an increasing number of people who suffer from several morbidities presenting a major burden on financial and other resources in the health and social care system, now and in the future. Yet it is now almost forty years since Antonovsky (1979) introduced 'Salutogenesis', an approach to health and wellbeing that encourages individuals to be responsible for managing

their own health and the role of health professionals to be as facilitators of this process.

Such an approach to health and social care was seen when the World Health Organisation (WHO) recommended lifestyle changes including healthy nutrition, being more active, losing weight, limiting alcohol and stopping smoking (WHO, 2009b). They suggested that 80% of deaths from these causes are preventable and that lifestyle improvement could have resulted in saving 36 million lives worldwide. In the UK a variety of initiatives have developed to address these issues (DOH, 2004a, 2005; Foresight, 2008; NEF, 2010) . Unfortunately the evidence is that the minimum year on year improvement of just 2% suggested by the WHO has not happened (WHO, 2010) and the mismatch continues (Kickbusch, Allen, & Franz, 2016).

This is reinforced by findings that show Britain is behind European averages on years of life lost (YLL) due to some of these NCDs including heart and vascular diseases e.g. UK deaths between age 16 and 60 years old are 9% of the male population compared to 7% in Sweden, 8% in the Netherlands and Norway (Murray et al., 2015). There is also a growing burden of disability (Schoeni et al., 2005) expressed as Disability Adjusted Life Years (DALYs), particularly from mental disorders, substance use, musculoskeletal disorders and falls, which are all lacking an appropriate response (Murray et al., 2013; Gilmour, 2017).

So recognising that there are many challenges to be faced in addressing health and wellbeing in the 21st century including the financing of care, this thesis explores

mindful contact with nature and its effect on the daily lives of those with existing health conditions including co-morbidities, ranging from NCDs to musculoskeletal disorders. Mindful contact with nature and living with existing conditions are areas which the current proliferation in health, mindfulness, and nature research discussed in chapters two and three fail to adequately address, focusing on positivist, empirical research that some regard as misleading (Coyne, et al., 2006; Coronado-Montoya, et al., 2016) and unhelpfully reductionist (Williams, 2013).

This research addresses this gap in our understanding by showing the difficulties faced by those living with chronic conditions and how, when people engage with nature based mindfulness in their daily lives, they become more confident, more able and more resilient. It also provides a bridge between chronic health management , nature connectivity and mindfulness to demonstrate how in combination there is greater potential benefit to patients and consequently to health provision. Putting such combination into practice provides a deeper yet novel treatment intervention for mindfulness practitioners and therapists. It contributes to the teaching of mindfulness, and through insights into the difficulties faced by those living with chronic conditions contributes to a more effective approach to the self management of such conditions.

1.2 The research

1.2.1 The Research Question

Does a focus on nature enable participants on a mindfulness programme to assimilate mindfulness practice into their daily lives with resultant improvement in health and wellbeing, greater resilience and a more successful approach to their self-management of chronic illness?

To answer the research question my aims were:

1. To determine which aspects of mindfulness and nature connection might have the greatest impact on the management of chronic health conditions, and to consider how these approaches might best be combined to achieve health outcomes.

The following objectives were met

1.1 Identification and review of issues concerning the impact and management of chronic disease in the early 21st century (Chapter 2, 2.1 - 2.5)

1.2 Identify the use of mindfulness based approaches, reviewing the evidence for their use, means of delivery (including teaching issues) and outcomes (Chapter 2, 2.6)

1.4 Identify the use of nature based health interventions, especially for those with chronic conditions (Chapter 3,)

1.5 Based on the critical review of the areas above identify gaps in knowledge and / or problems to be addressed in this research (Chapter 2, 2.6, 2.7; chapter 3, 3.6)

2. To determine an appropriate methodology and consequent method to answer the research question.

The following objectives were met

2.1 Examine current research methods to identify appropriate means of exploring the daily lives of participants (Chapter 5)

2.2 Identify an appropriate methodology and subsequent methods that will enable the research question to be answered, including:

2.2.1 Determine selection criteria for the study (Chapter 5, 5.4).

2.2.3 Deliver a nature-based mindfulness training programme (Chapter 6, Table 21, Chapter 9, table 33).

3. To determine how participants engaged with nature based mindfulness in their daily lives and how such engagement affected the self management of their conditions.

The following objectives were met

3.1 Identify the nature based mindfulness practices participants used for the self-management of long term conditions (Chapter 6, table 21).

3.2 Identifying the benefits of mindful engagement with, and connectedness to, nature, for those affected by chronic conditions. Including how participants developed their mindfulness practice (Chapter 9) and potential impact and benefit to ongoing healthcare.

 **PERSONAL REFLECTION**

This being that becomes, from the arising of that which arises. This being that ceases to become, from the ceasing of that which ceases.

(Paticca -Samuppada, Pali Canon)

In seeking to answer the research question I believe the above phrase at the core of Buddhist practice, referred to in chapter 2, is enmeshed not only in the understanding of mindfulness but in the way I respond to, and construct ideas. It illustrates the belief that all things are interconnected, are the product of actions, circumstances, things animate or inanimate. It provides a means of understanding that we can never be truly independent, our role, our viewpoint, will always be conditioned by the circumstances that have led to our being in the position we are, researcher, therapist, patient. Throughout the thesis text boxes such as this one are used to encapsulate thoughts about my own perceptions on the process of undertaking this Doctorate. These are not simply a reflection on activity, rather they are reflexive pieces that seek to illustrate how and why I am interpreting what is taking place, showing how I am part of the process rather than separate to it, understanding the epistemological position that has shaped how I view things (Macbeth, 2001) .

Throughout the thesis I seek to examine my own views and how they occur and are supported, seeking to identify and understand the ‘baggage’ I bring, from the different perspectives of researcher, teacher, participant (Cousin, 2016).

1.3 Society in the 21st Century: A contextual twist

Some feel we are disconnected from nature, materialistic, and self-centred (MacKinnon, 2012). Such alienation has been described by terms such as "nature-deficit disorder" (Louv, 2006). This is the absence of connectedness to and awareness of nature resulting from fixation on artificial entertainment rather than natural wonders (Staiano et al., 2015). Some are obsessed with computer games, others drive by car from activity to activity, all miss the restorative effects (Hansen-Ketchum et al., 2011) that come with the nimbler bodies, broader minds (Duncan, et al., 2014) and sharper senses which are developed during random running-around in everyday urban existence (Louv, 2006 & 2012; Goleman et al., 2012; Sandrey, 2013; Tremblay et al., 2015).

While recognising the resultant health challenges we face, our society, not only in the West but increasingly in the Far East, (Chen et al., 2015) and the rest of the developing world (Kampfhammer, 2012), promotes consumerism as one means to solve problems, attain prosperity, wellbeing and happiness (Barrie & Jones, 2011). The addictiveness of new technology (Echeburúa & De Corral, 2010) means an ever increasing need not only to be 'connected', but to be seen to be so, including the recent proliferation of 'smartphone' packages for mindfulness (Howells, 2016) and others 'demonstrating a need to be 'connected for wellbeing'(Lane et al., 2014). Using the latest smart phones and tablets, allied to the need for faster broadband, 'wifi', time and labour saving devices may help us feel more comfortable with our insulated homes and consumer lifestyle, but could mean we feel increasingly

disconnected from, even threatened by nature (Chen-Hsuan Cheng & Monroe, 2012). Our awareness of health benefits becomes masked by the technology around us (Logan & Selhub, 2012). The result, that our society is stressed out, overweight, out of shape, depressed (Cohen, 2003; Capaldi et al., 2014) spiritually hungry (Holmes, 2007) and suffering from the lifestyle diseases (Arena et al., 2015) that are concerning the WHO. That some seek quick fixes in the form of antidepressants, miracle drugs, diet milkshakes, plastic surgery, or temporary relief in the form of smoking, alcohol and / or drugs is also undeniable (Barrie & Jones, 2011). There are those who suggest an 'alternative hedonism' (Soper, 2007) in which attention is made to these negative aspects of consumerism and to developing a more socially accountable and sustainable consumption.

Increasing recognition of this lack of connection, and other impacts of our lifestyles (WHO, 2009b; Everri, 2017) has seen a corresponding growth in therapeutic interventions (Buzzell & Chalquist, 2009; Park et al., 2010; Rust & Totton, 2012; Jordan, 2015) aiming to restore balance. Some such as ecopsychology (Rozack et al., 1995), which also recognises the additional impacts of our environmental awareness, are discussed later. These areas are combined in my own practice and the development of nature based mindfulness approaches as a further means of addressing the issues discussed.

1.4 Stimulus for this research

The development of this thesis was stimulated by a number of experiences, personal and professional and through the literature review and subsequent identification of gaps in knowledge. I have a chronic health condition and have found relief through developing nature connectedness and mindfulness, thus I wish to understand how combining these approaches can help others. Professional experiences gained working with individuals and groups from young men within the youth justice system through to adults with chronic illnesses also provided insights into managing conditions. Both strands of experience, personal and professional, involve connecting with the world we all live in and with ‘nature’ in whatever way we view and understand it.

There is growing awareness and use of mindfulness based approaches (MBAs) in a variety of sectors. These range from health, where they can be seen in the treatment of chronic and recurrent depression (NICE, 2013), through to military training (Stanley et al., 2011). While this growing use is widely beneficial it will be seen that there are questions about the depth, ethical values and therefore appropriateness of some approaches, even its fashion status (Shonin et al., 2015; Van Gordon et al., 2015).

In the UK alone since 2005 we have seen the increased use of mindfulness based techniques within the National Health Service (MAPPG., 2015), within taught programmes at universities (Aberdeen, Bangor, East London, Exeter, Oxford, Salford) and also by individual and groups of therapists (Breathworks and Federation of Holistic Therapists). As a result we are likely to see more research (Black, 2016) that identifies mindfulness as a key element in treatment protocols, as an ingredient in the

therapeutic relationship, and as a means for health workers and patients themselves to cultivate personal qualities and general well-being (Elliot, 2011; Burrows, 2011).

This research project focuses on using nature based activities such as sense awareness (Fig. 1) to enhance mindfulness teaching and practice, overcoming some of the barriers and difficulties experienced in building mindfulness practice into daily life as well as providing an active intervention more suitable for certain client groups.



Fig 1. Views such as this of the Cumbrian Fells can aid in the development and appreciation of our senses. (Burns 1998)

It is important to note that such activities are not seen as an additional element of practice, rather as an integral part of it, arising from original Buddhist teachings of Mindfulness (Gunaratana, 2012) especially those taken from the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutra on the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (Table 1).

Table 1 - Four foundations of mindfulness (Gunaratana, 2012)	
Foundation (inc.Pali original)	Description
Mindfulness of the body Kayanupassana	Recognising the body as not a single unified being, rather a collection of parts, e.g. skin, skeleton, blood, muscles. This recognition is a core element of practice especially for those such as the study participants, who because of their chronic condition may have grown to resist focusing inwards on the actual moment by moment experience they have.
Mindfulness of feelings Vedananupassana	Our feelings can be divided even multifaceted. Some will be pleasant, some unpleasant, even feelings of indifference and again a person's experience may focus their attention on only the negative, so practice will broaden this, allowing us to adopt the 'non-judgemental' approach used in secular definitions.
Mindfulness of mind Cittanupassana	Once again this same process of recognising the mind not as a single thing with a single view point, rather something that is constantly changing, may have been subject to conditioning, can be changed, can react moment by moment based on input from our senses. In this context the word Citta relates more to consciousness than the mind as an entity. The nature focus adopted brings this Foundation to the fore in terms of sense awareness of the world around us.
Mindfulness of phenomena (dhammas) Dhammanupassana	The word Dhamma means teaching, and this foundation refers to the teaching that we are all suffering, are all affected by phenomena, are all connected and all our actions have consequences (see section on pratitya-samutpada) and we should remember to be mindful of this. Within the approach used in this research study this Foundation is at the core of recognising our place in society, in our environment and our impact on these.

As can be seen from table 1, the first three foundations relate to our mindfulness of body, thoughts and feelings and how we relate to the world around us, while the fourth foundation, dhamma-nupassana is often taken as contemplation or mindfulness of our experience of the natural order (Amaro, 2013). More will be said about this in Chapter Two. I feel it important to remember these foundations and their purpose, as this helps focus on 'being' mindful rather than 'doing' mindfulness practice, a key distinction in the integration and therefore benefit of building mindfulness into daily life (Carmody & Baer, 2008). This means that mindfulness is a dynamic process rather than a static skill, a concept that this study seeks to illustrate. This dynamism is something that has been overlooked in other published papers (e.g. Gockel et al.,

2013) that may discuss concepts such as ‘doses’ of mindfulness (meaning daily sessions of 10 minutes of meditation or similar) in comparison to another intervention e.g. the dose of a drug, rather than the impact of practice, the actual difference it makes.

 **PERSONAL REFLECTION**

This study is informed by my own practice and understanding of mindfulness, my delivery of mindfulness based programmes, and my involvement in the development of mindfulness teacher training in the UK. I am aware that this can be perceived as providing a potential bias and therefore strive throughout the thesis to ensure that voice is given to participants and other perspectives as they occur.

This includes my perspectives as an ordained member of the Triratna Buddhist Order and means recognising that there are many formulations of mindfulness being used in different arenas, some strictly clinical, others from a more esoteric and/or spiritual background (Kwee, 2011)

1.5 Structure of the Thesis

This chapter, provides an overview of the whole thesis, discussing the issues that will be raised and providing a guide to the structure of the thesis.

Chapter Two reviews health and wellbeing issues in the 21st Century, especially the self-management of chronic and long term conditions. The concept of Mindfulness is explored, from its origins in Buddhism to its application in secular health settings. It raises the issues of short term intervention or addressing long term lifestyle change. Concerns over the secularisation of mindfulness as part of a desire to make it more acceptable as an intervention are raised through referring to traditional Buddhist teachings that impact on the beneficial practice of mindfulness.

Chapter Three explores the meaning we attach to nature before introducing the role of specific therapeutic interventions. These encompass a broad range of nature based approaches to health where methods of psychological healing especially are grounded in the fact that humans are part of, and inseparable from nature and are nurtured by healthy interaction with it, reflecting Buddhist views on interconnectivity and conditionality. This chapter helps the reader explore the positioning of nature within mindfulness practice.

Chapter Four ‘Coming to our Senses’ brings the concepts of mindfulness, outdoor therapy and nature together before introducing issues of why people don’t maintain motivation, how cultural influences can impact on our sense of wellbeing, demonstrating why a salutogenic approach is appropriate.

Chapter Five - 'Methodology' discusses researching and adequately reflecting daily life, especially from different perspectives. The chapter raises the role of the researcher and especially the difficulties and potential blurring of roles when the researcher is also subject. The Bricolage method chosen is explored and justified.

Chapter Six - Constructing the Bricolage, describes the methods used, from pilot study through programme design to collecting the evidence. It shows who the participants were, how they were selected, trained in the nature based mindfulness approach and how they used the practices taught, including exploring the application of these practices for the improvement of their own self-management of long term conditions.

Chapter Seven - The Journeymen introduces the individual participants and illustrates the lives they lead, the practices they have used and how these help answer the research question and meet the study objectives.

Chapter Eight - Discusses the participant's nature based mindfulness practices, themes that have arisen and show how simple techniques can have a major impact and suggesting how ideas can be taken up by the teachers and practitioners.

Chapter Nine - The Conclusion shows how the gaps in literature ranging from the lack of nature integration in mindfulness practice through to issues about self-efficacy in health and wellbeing have been addressed. It highlights areas for future research, suggestions for practitioners and allows the participants a final word.

Finally appendices A - G provide supporting information such as images produced by research participants, transcripts of interviews and copies of clearances and approvals.

1.6 Importance of this Research

As a practitioner and trainer I am aware of the importance of evidence based practice while at the same time recognising the difficulties inherent in attempting to describe and evaluate the application of methods and their practice within different contexts. These difficulties start from simply defining the terms used such as mindfulness and nature and progress to understanding the developmental and contextual aspects of practice. Further challenges involve describing the actual experience of daily lives, how they are affected by illness and the use of mindfulness with its impact on daily living.

Many studies of mindfulness and nature based interventions focus on dissecting certain aspects of activities, experiences and outcomes. This means that they often compartmentalise issues, for example modulation of areas of the brain implicated in neural responses (Taylor et al., 2011) rather than identifying and understanding the interrelationships and the wider value based aspects of practice in daily life. There are concerns that such studies and the tools they employ are reductionist, resulting in a fragmented approach especially to mindfulness that fails to adequately portray or capture its full potential impact on a person's life (Shapiro, 2013; Williams, 2013). It has been suggested that this actual mastery of activities and their application is worthy

of investigation (Grossman & Van Dam, 2011; Drewellies et al., 2016), this an area this study seeks to address.

In my teaching practice, discussions with NHS Commissioners identified that for their needs, studies should provide comparison alongside other programmes or interventions (e.g. medication), meaning a traditional empirical study suggesting the one hypothesis or another is equal to or better than another solution. Typically in mindfulness research this would normally suggest something along the lines of '*may have great potential to assist participants in managing ongoing difficulties ... when delivered alongside conventional treatment*' (Advocat et al., 2016). Alternatively it was suggested that a study would be considered if it was able to demonstrate lasting positive outcomes for patients. In particular that they had taken on self-management responsibility and were seen to be using primary services less. This then emphasises the importance of methodologies focusing on self-identified and reported sustainable impact on lifestyle. This research seeks to construct a bricolage, identifying and exploring the lived experiences of study participants, rather than compartmentalising a particular responses, in doing so identifying the positive and lasting outcomes for participants.

1.7 Summary

Why this research matters

- While there is a growing abundance of research on the benefits of a mindfulness based approach there is little that examines how people living with chronic conditions are able to incorporate practices into their daily lives. This research demonstrates this.
- In a similar vein, much research exists on the benefits of a connection to nature, increasingly in relation to children but there is a paucity of studies showing the outcomes of a restorative connection to nature for adults with existing conditions. This research illustrates how adults have found connections with nature, including those established in childhood, important.
- In the UK most training of mindfulness teachers is based in an environment that encourages a connection to nature e.g. a retreat centre in a rural location, but the actual syllabus followed fails to address nature connectivity in any significant detail. This can mean teachers delivering programmes in an urban environment fail to address such connections with participants. This research makes specific suggestions for mindfulness teachers and others.
- Though many learn mindfulness in a secular context, fewer integrate it fully into their daily lives, using it instead as a ‘known’ remedy when symptoms flare. The approach described in this thesis gives people confidence, improving the sense of

self-efficacy, that there are practices they can engage with everyday. In doing so it both addresses problems of engagement and condition management.

- While maintaining the secular context needed for wider acceptability, the nature based mindfulness approach restores connectivity to the environment we are part of, bringing together nature, mindfulness and self efficacy in managing conditions, benefiting participants, their families and the wider community. This 'bringing together' is one area in which this research contributes to existing knowledge and provides a context for future development.

Chapter 2 – Health and Wellbeing in the 21st century: responding mindfully

2.1 Chapter Overview

UK citizens face significant health issues now and in the near future. There are differences in health outcomes between populations such as those affected by poverty and this links to the growing impact of chronic illness. The role of self-management in health care is highlighted, including how it contributes to the financial efficacy of services and setting the scene for an increased role of mindfulness in health and wellbeing provision.

This role is then explored in more detail, providing the background to the growing use of and research into mindfulness approaches. Issues are raised about the content of mindfulness programmes and the value of approaches to understanding their efficacy.

2.2 Physical Health

Over fifty years ago the World Health Organisation defined health as a ‘state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity’ (WHO, 1946). Whether or not this definition has stood the test of time and is still valid today can be argued. Huber et al., (2011) contest that the definition itself gives rise to the increased medicalisation of society due to the emphasis on *complete* health. However we have moved from a situation where the absence of infectious disease such as smallpox and polio has been replaced with what could be described as lifestyle diseases. In addition there is more recognition of mental health and social factors being vital to wellbeing.

2.2.1 Social Issues

Health within any given population reflects a wide range of factors, most significantly the poverty experienced in that area. In Cumbria alone (the area from which research participants were drawn) some 16% of the population live in deprived areas, with Barrow, the closest town to most participants in this study, being amongst the 10% most deprived areas (local authority areas) in the country. There is evidence to suggest that chronic illnesses such as heart and respiratory diseases are much more prevalent in deprived areas (DOH, 2004b; Davies, 2014) and there is a 19.5 year gap in life expectancy between those living in poorer areas e.g. Copeland and Carlisle compared to more

affluent ones e.g. the South Lakes., while 35% of all those seen to have some form of mental illness live in the five poorest areas of the county (Cumbria Observatory, 2015). The county itself has the highest proportion of obese people in the country, over 75% of the population of the Copeland district alone (CPFT, 2014), all suggesting that there is a need for greater effort to address the awareness and self management of health and wellbeing.

Additionally changing demographics influence health care. The national picture highlighted in chapter one is of the migration of young people to cities which has numerous impacts including the reduction in numbers of people of working age in rural areas with a consequent reduction in income for local authorities serving these populations. Likewise the number of older people, potentially those in greater need of health and wellbeing support (Hirschberg, 2012), is increasing in these areas. With the health and care pressures growing questions of funding and affordability of services are already being raised.

2.2.2 Chronic Illness and Pain

Over 15 million people have long term conditions (LTCs), those that cannot at present be cured, but are managed by medication and other forms of treatment or therapy. Forecasts from the NHS are that by 2030 almost 65% of people over 60 years old will be living with some form of life limiting illness (Lloyd & Heller, 2012; Public Health England, 2015). People with such conditions account for over 70% of the UK health and care spend (HSCIC, 2014). However this figure represents those appearing on the Health Quality and Outcomes Framework (QOF) which lists prevalent conditions such as diseases and mental health issues and does not include over 5 million people with musculoskeletal conditions (DoH, 2012). Although some of these conditions are reflected in other statistics such as those of work related illness and injury (HSE, 2014).

Musculoskeletal disorders and stress (8.8 and 11.7 million working days respectively) are the leading causes of sickness absence from work in the UK (HSE, 2016). The HSE has estimated that 10 million working days were lost annually from musculoskeletal disorders affecting the back (HSE, 2014). The most recent estimate of the annual cost of back pain to the NHS was given as £481 million. The overall cost to industry has been estimated at £5 billion. This is a substantial burden. Back pain and especially lower back pain is the main cause for disability affected life years around the world, affecting all workplaces

and a number of participants in this study (Traeger et al., 2016). The highest incidence occurs in sectors which also happen to dominate the economy of Cumbria where this study took place. These include retail, food, agriculture, tourism and the health service.

The UK figures above, though recently demonstrating a reduction in cases due to education and enforcement, including revised testing of benefit claimants, show the scale of the problem of work related illness. They fail though to account for those outside the scope of the results (50% of participants in my research) who are no longer recorded within the HSE statistics (having completely left the workforce) as well as those no longer regarded as being of 'working age', a difficult distinction given changes in pension rules and levels of personal income. While the total cost of pain to the economy in terms of people removed from the workplace because of chronic illness is therefore unknown, others argue that the impact of chronic illness on participation in society, whether at the family level or the wider community is hidden (Rosland et al., 2011; Hirschberg, 2012). There are over 920,000 people in receipt of employment support allowance (ESA) which is designed to help those coping with illness or other condition return to work, while a further 3.2 million people receive disabled living allowance (DLA) at some level including allowances for mobility (Brown & Hood, 2012).

There are many other instances of illness acting on an individual's capacity to work, to take part in everyday activity and to engage with society. For example a survey by the All Party Parliamentary Group on Endometriosis showed that on average, women with this condition lose 55 days from work per annum (EST., 2005). The National Rheumatoid Arthritis Society estimates that 9.4 million working days are lost through the pain of Rheumatoid Arthritis. These surveys show that this is an enormous problem but there does not appear to be an accurate measure of either the total burden to society as a whole of chronic pain (British Pain Society (BPS), 2013) or the impact of self-management on such pain or its causes.

The cost to the NHS alone of treating chronic pain is also not known. Recent studies have demonstrated that the cost of adolescent pain is nearly £4 billion per annum alone, calculated at an average of £8000 per teenager (BPS, 2013). With such a cost to the country, industry and individuals themselves, it is clear that pain management is an important issue and one that mindfulness and other programmes can address (Burch, 2008).

Additionally, people with a chronic health condition face a 2.6 fold increase in the likelihood of having mental health problems, compared to the general population who don't have a chronic illness (Davies, 2014).

2.3 Mental Health

In the UK, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) Guidelines highlight the vulnerability of those with long term, chronic physical conditions to issues such as depression and anxiety (NICE, 2013). The guideline illustrates that while depression is a wide and heterogeneous diagnosis, covering as it does both the depressed mood and loss of pleasure (key to sense of wellbeing), the formal diagnosis of severity may not be met by many with chronic illness as their symptoms may be what is termed as ‘subthreshold depressive symptoms’ which often present as accumulating over long periods, a gradual wearing down of the person with chronic health problems. It will be seen later that Mindfulness, especially the use of Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy (Segal et al., 2002) is understood to be useful in treating depression, especially where there is risk of relapse. For those with chronic illnesses included in this study the nature based mindfulness practices also address other psychological and social factors highlighted by the guidelines.

The World Health Organisation (WHO, 2009a) has defined mental wellbeing as a state of wellbeing in which the individual is able to realise his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community. While this definition clearly delineates the lack of mental illness as different to mental wellbeing it

is not as widely accepted as it does not address issues such as resilience, the capacity to cope, to have internal resources that help when faced with problems.

The lack of a clearly agreed definition of mental wellbeing may be because of its different meaning in different individuals, cultures, even situations. In the UK, the coalition government (2010 – 2015) discussed issues of mental health and happiness raised in the Foresight Report (Foresight, 2008), recognising that for one man happiness may mean a large bank balance for another it means having fresh water to drink. For some it could be achieving career ambitions for others it could be to reach adulthood (NEF, 2010). Mental wellbeing must include a full range of responses, emotional, cognitive and behavioural, at an individual level (Ranweera & Chandra, 2009), a range that obviously includes the individual's ability to manage their own needs, from shelter and security to self-actualisation (Maslow, 1943). However it must also be recognised that external factors can impact on our wellbeing. These range from the nature of the local environment, strength of community cohesion, to faith in the Government's ability to address key issues, and to society at large (Beaumont, 2011). For some this includes a spiritual or religious faith or at least the opportunity to express this.

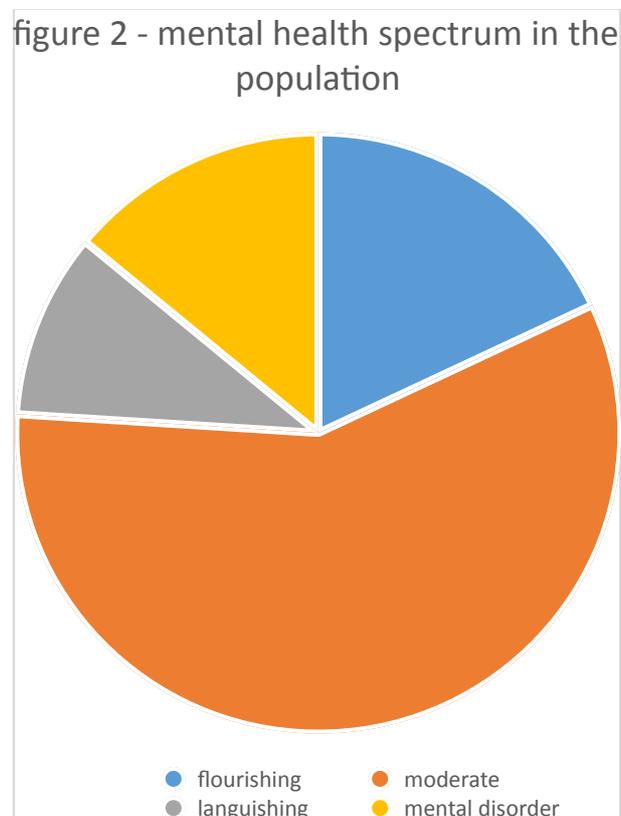
Given that UK figures suggest that 1 in 4 of the population will face mental health issues at any one time (Halliwell et al, 2007; Davies, 2014) then just as with physical health, our mental health can be positioned on a continuum, with an overall health spectrum from needing help and support to being fully able to meet and address life's challenges without problem. However interpreting the data can be difficult. Recently there has been an increase of 9.8% in people accessing Mental Health Services. However when the first option for a GP is to suggest self-help, with referrals to organisations such as MIND and other local initiatives also suggested before some patients being given anti-depressants, it is clear that more people suffer from problems than actually get referred to formal Mental Health Services. (HSCIC, 2014). Additionally statistics only reflect a single intervention (that at the highest level of care) which, while avoiding counting people more than once, does not reflect the number of episodes requiring treatment or the burden of illness on the individual, family and friends, or health and social care services. There is then the potential for community based mindfulness approaches which are efficacious and cost effective.

Today, even though we may recognise the issues involved, we may not have the appropriate answer or at least the individual may feel it is beyond their means. The World Health Organisation estimating that depression and depression-related illnesses will become the greatest

source of ill-health by 2020 (WHO, 2009). In the UK the latest report (Davies, 2014) from the Chief Medical Officer states that:

Mental illness is the largest single cause of disability and represents 23% of the national disease burden in the UK. It is the leading cause of sickness absence in the UK, accounting for 70 million sick days in 2013 and costing the UK economy £70–£100 billion per year; or 4.5% of the UK's Gross Domestic Product.

There is an increasing awareness that many of our behaviours, such as smoking, over-eating and high alcohol consumption, are coping mechanisms for depression, and have their own serious consequences.



Stress, a major problem for people living in modern societies, is recognised as a strong predictor of mortality (Rainford et al., 2000). As already mentioned, at any one time 1 in 4 of the population is facing mental health issues. Perhaps more crucially, 1 in 6 are actively seeking treatment from mental health services (McManus et al., 2009) (fig. 2).

In 2008, the Government commissioned the Foresight Report ‘Mental Capital and Wellbeing: Making the most of ourselves in the 21st century’ (Foresight, 2008). The current level of political and policy interest in the field of public mental health in Britain continues to grow following final publication of the Foresight Report and the subsequent work on the Five Ways to Wellbeing Project (NEF, 2010). The Five Ways to Wellbeing are shown in Table 2.

Table 2 – Five Ways to Wellbeing

(table adapted from 5 ways to wellbeing, NEF 2010)

Way to Wellbeing	Relationship to this study
Connect	Taking part in a mindfulness programme encourages communication with others. This starts by noticing our responses to other people, whether family, friends, colleagues, even strangers
Be active	While moving mindfully is an essential part of all mindfulness programmes, this study encourages wider activity such as longer walks outdoors, all the time emphasising an awareness of the body and our surroundings
Take notice	Awareness, at the core of the programme. Encouraging use of the senses, awareness of responses to the usual and the mundane. Reflecting on our experience and our responses to it.
Keep learning	The programme involved learning and developing mindfulness, the practice of which then encourages further exploration of thoughts, feelings, emotions and challenges us to engage.
Give	Mindfulness practice encourages awareness of others, develops a compassionate response to the needs of ourselves and others. Nature based mindfulness practice widens this response to include recognising the needs of the environment and community we are part of and contributing to it in some way.

The public health messages resulting from the report were developed further by the New Economics Foundation (NEF) who built on existing knowledge and research to develop and communicate a vision of the future including the opportunities and challenges facing the UK over the next 20 years and the implications for everyone's 'mental capital' and 'mental wellbeing' (NEF 2010).

'Mental capital' can be defined as the cognitive and emotional resources we have available in times of difficulty (Foresight 2008). This combines our cognitive ability including how we learn, flexibility and the emotional intelligence we bring to bear in areas such as social skills. All of which add up to enable us to be resilient, to have the ability to cope, in times of stress or difficulty. 'Mental wellbeing' is an active state, one in which we are able to work creatively and effectively (Foresight *ibid.*), a state where we have a sense of being able to reach our potential, have strong, fruitful relationships and be part of and contribute to a community we value.

Further progress was made when work was consolidated in 2011 with the Coalition Government in the UK launching their new health outcomes strategy, *No Health without Mental Health*. This strategy had two clear aims.

1. To improve the mental health and wellbeing of the whole population and to work to keep people well
2. Improve the outcomes for those with mental health problems, through providing accessible and high quality services

However, as part of their reporting NEF did identify that there was a lack of epidemiological evidence examining measures and determinants of well-being (NEF, 2010). Also that there was a greater prevalence of cross-sectional studies in the literature, and these tend to look at a snapshot of wellbeing at a particular moment rather than following the same individuals over time (Booth, 2006). This is an issue that contributes to the design of this research study where participants are encouraged to share their own responses over the course of the study. By focusing on the participants own feelings and reflections on wellbeing in this way, the study seeks to overcome some of the difficulties of reductionism and identification of causality and effectiveness seen in other interventions.

Despite the progress made and the strategy of the Government, there are still important mental health issues to address. Although these are recognised, antidepressant medication is still an important part of treatment, and increasingly so. In 2005, 27.7 million antidepressant prescriptions were written in England, at a cost of £338 million to the NHS (Mind, 2007). Since then the use of antidepressants has continued

to increase. This rise, a 165% increase over 10 years, equates to a year on year rise on average of 7.2%. However there has been a particular rise in use seen since the impact of the 2008 recession and subsequent introduction of austerity measures by the Government (Spence et al., 2014), a rise despite the Government's strategy of mental health and wellbeing.

So as the *Wellbeing and Public Mental Health: an evidence and policy framework* established, good mental health is about more than the treating of stress and working towards an absence of mental illness. It is about the emotional and spiritual resilience that enables us to enjoy life and to survive pain, disappointment and sadness, the ability to develop a positive sense of well-being and an underlying belief in our own worth and the dignity and worth of others (HDA, 2004; Beaumont, 2011). Within the NHS this is reflected in the use of a new reporting framework that illustrates patient outcomes, and includes four outcome domains that are used to evaluate outcomes for those accessing services (Pirkis et al., 2005). These are personal wellbeing, emotional wellbeing, social wellbeing and severe disturbance, all areas that can equally be applied to living with chronic physical conditions as well as mental ones and areas reflected in this research.

In a report from the UK's Chief Medical Officer it was estimated that a 10 per cent increase in adult physical activity would benefit the NHS

by £500 million per year, saving 6,000 lives. This calculation does not include the potential economic impact of improved mental wellbeing in terms of improved productivity (DOH, 2004a). Within this research study, one aspect of the mindfulness programme was mindful walking while another encouraged participants to seek out places in the local area and further afield that they could use as a place to observe themselves and the environment they were in all as a means of managing their own mental wellbeing.

There are more than mental health benefits resulting from a nature based mindfulness approach. There is recognition that nature as a resource can be effectively integrated into any kind of population that seeks not only therapy but also improved health and wellbeing (Berger & McLeod, 2006; Iggulden 2007; Mayer et al., 2009; Annerstedt & Währborg, 2011). This is supported in a review of diet and physical activity, which advocates the adoption of physical activities within nature again supporting the ‘biophilia hypothesis’ that closeness to nature increases well-being (Kellert & Wilson, 1984). Such ‘green exercise’ can be seen in the well-established Green Gym programmes of the environmental charities BTCV and Groundwork (Pretty, 2003) while the benefits of a more mindfulness based approach are also reflected in studies (Ambrose-Oji, 2013) which show that lower intensity activity in the outdoors such as walking have more beneficial effects on mood and self-esteem than higher intensity or more

demanding activity (Barton & Pretty 2010; Duncan et al 2014). These benefits are also seen in short duration exposure to the natural environment, such as that involved in this research study's use of a 'sit spot' (spending time in a chosen place, observing) about which more will be said in later chapters.

The practice of mindfulness can be seen as a means of 'primordial prevention' (Strasser, 1978) as the practices can be adopted as a means of preventing issues rather than in response to them. The same would be true of introducing nature based mindfulness approaches as a community based initiative, part of a wider physical and mental community health programme.

All these facts and figures illustrate the prevailing view on which our health models are constructed is deeply rooted in rationalism and reductionism and this shapes the views of health professionals, strategists and commissioners. This philosophy holds that the world is orderly and that if we can discern that order and the reasons behind it then that reason, rather than patient experience, is the best guide for belief and action (Bussolari, C. J., & Goodell, J. A. 2009) areas that are challenged by the concept of self-management.

2.4 Self-Management

Firstly it is important to emphasise that self-management is not the same as self-help. Self-help refers to a way of expanding individual knowledge, perhaps leading to a better understanding of oneself. While self-management also expands patient knowledge, enabling a patient to gain control of their illness or its symptoms and effects (Challis et al., 2010), it does so on the basis of an intervention or series of interventions that are carefully chosen. These are directed and supported by professionals from health or other sectors.

Self-help refers to not only a *self-guided* programme of improvement, often supported by books and audio-visual resources, but also to an entire industry that promotes such products and the achievements possible through their use. It can be computer or book based and is available as a service which can be prescribed by General Practitioners and others such as the NHS Books on Prescription service (Chamberlain et al., 2008). As stated this is very different from services directed by a health or other professional as part of a purpose designed programme. In fact one of the key features seen in the self-help sector is the freedom of the individual to investigate and choose their own product or programme. Most people will have noticed the plethora of self-help materials including books on mindfulness by celebrity authors, available in bookshops and online, leaving many to question the efficacy and evidence supporting their use. However while falling

outside the scope of this thesis, there is an increasing debate and volume of research (Redding et al., 2008) exploring the wider market for self-help materials and of mindfulness resources including those online in particular (Krusche et al., 2013).

While self-help can be an economical and convenient way to increase understanding it does not present the structured, facilitated therapeutic intervention that forms a self-management programme which represents a fundamental transformation of relationships within a care partnership (de Silva 2011; Naylor et al., 2015).

In 2015, the NHS was seen by many as a ‘political football’ (BMA, 2015) with all political parties claiming funding is effective or that they had the best plans to ensure its future effectiveness (Grice, 2015).

Without doubt, as a public service it is under pressure to make efficiency savings while at the same time coping with a population that is living longer, needs more care and presents problems not seen before such as the increasing burden of chronic illness.

Increasingly, the costs of dealing with chronic illness, physical and mental, alongside the existing and future changes demanded within the NHS and local authorities, all affecting provision of health and social care, are emphasising the importance of individual self-management of illness and also of community based initiatives to health and wellbeing

improvement (Chisholm, 2012). While self-management requires personal responsibility, community activity provides a platform for sharing and support, one that provides positive feedback to the individual who then assumes more responsibility (Bushman, 2011).

Within such a setting, self-management has to be seen as an efficacious (Challis et al., 2010) and financially attractive option for the future. Such an approach (*Salutogenic*) does of course need a cultural shift as the responsibility for care moves back to the patient, who needs to be both willing to adopt the approach and confident and empowered to ensure its effectiveness. However this cultural shift also applies to the health professionals themselves. Planners, managers and health practitioners themselves need to look at other than traditional medical interventions and how much understanding they have of how to support patients electing a self-management approach (Coster & Norman, 2009). Self-management can be effective not only for the individual patient but their family and friends and also health service providers at all levels from primary to tertiary care.

We all have interests that lead to different experiences, giving opportunities for activity, thought and reflection. How in health terms we take someone from gaining knowledge to developing a personal practice, one that will last, and will influence behaviour, becoming transformative is the key to a successful approach. The effective self-

management programme is one that engages people and one that works every day, not just when there is a problem.

By education, raising awareness and promoting the benefits of self-management approaches (Figure 3), it is claimed that it is possible to improve outcomes for patients and for the health service as a whole (Nuffield, 2007).

Patients who desire to be active whether for work or leisure, stress the importance of their autonomy and are more likely to engage in the self-management of conditions. Less active patients value the guidance of their Healthcare Professional who they trust to make the right decisions about their health and the intervention they need (This was seen with three of the study participants, Maggie, David and Barbara). Some professionals may also prefer a more dominating relationship, expecting the patient to take their advice. Such relationships also underpin health-care policies such as decisions on spending (Bovenkamp,& Dwarswaard, 2017). For this reason, in this research study, efforts were made to continually assess patient experience and progress that matched their values. This resulted in the development of the Nature Based Mindfulness Compass Rose (appendix X) which provided a participant view of progress during the study.

The role of the self-management programme is to educate the patient, enabling them to make better choices, with the incentive of health benefits and enabling their understanding of disincentives.

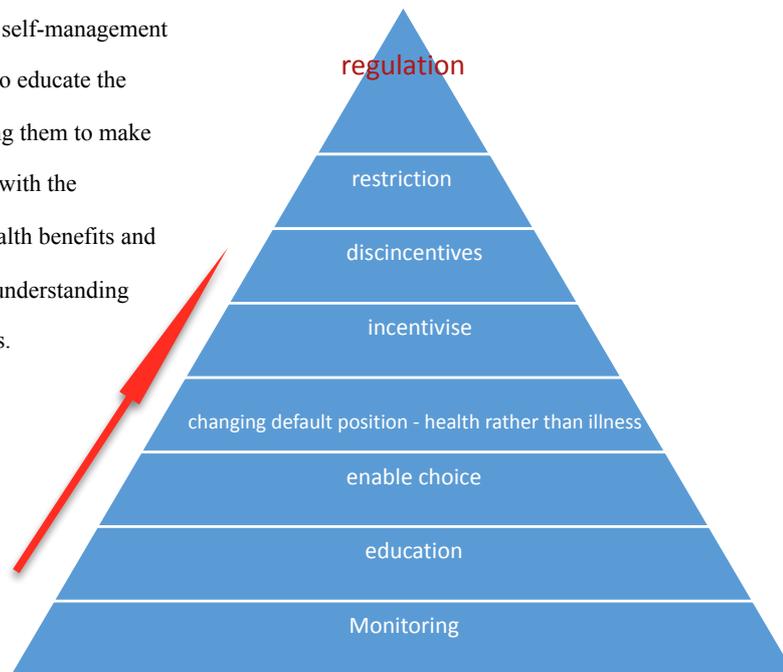


Figure 3 - a ladder of intervention, is adapted from the Nuffield Council on Bioethics 2007 report: 'Public Health, ethical issues' report 2007 and cited in the Government's 2010 report Public Health White Paper: 'Healthy Lives, Healthy People: Our strategy for public health in England' illustrates where the Naturally Mindful programme on which this research is based, is positioned. Moving from providing information, through enabling, to guiding healthier choices.

Studies of self-management reviewed to date use a variety of measures to assess interventions ranging from the use of the SF36 assessment to referral and personal selection by the practitioner (Loganathan, 2007). Undertaking an eight-week programme (average) and continuing to use the techniques in daily life is a major undertaking (figure 3) and not one that will be readily understood by many people, especially those used to an intervention based on immediacy e.g. medication. Since people cannot be forced to attend psycho-educational interventions such as MBSR, understanding more about the factors that prompt

people to take the first step towards self-management by enrolling on an intervention appears warranted (Barlow, 2002; Roth & Robbins, 2004). There are of course studies discussing the onset of chronic conditions (Donoghue & Siegel, 2000; Galvin, 2002; DOH, 2004b; Kralik et al., 2004; Rosland et al., 2011; Årestedt, et al., 2015; Sav et al., 2015) but these do not extend to progressing from onset to long-term management. It is in this area that Nature Based Mindfulness Approaches can appear more appealing as they are seen to have a more active component than sedentary one. It is however important for future research to clarify which patients are most likely to respond positively to MB approaches and what the key psychosocial, contextual, and attitudinal variables might be (i.e. emotional distress, readiness to change, desire for control) (Astin, 2004).

Nature based mindfulness approaches with active components such as those used in this study (Bratman et al., 2012; Brazier, 2014) can help prevent relapse or sliding backwards (Fig. 4) by encouraging participants to have a variety of techniques and activities that enable them to respond effectively to daily circumstances. Individuals can be seen as being assisted onto the spiral path - a 'virtual escalator', as one lifestyle behavioural choice leads to another potentially more significant choice.

Successful self-management - the spiral path



Figure 4: Spiral path of self-management
Adapted from Prochaska & DiClementis (1992)

PERSONAL REFLECTION

I always had excuses for not addressing health issues, whether physical or emotional, busy at work, issues with my kids, not enough money, and any other reason, life just seemed too much and contributed to a constant progress and sliding back shown in Figure 6 before real progress was made.

I experience health issues each and every day, at home, at work and during leisure. Sometimes physical issues, incredible pain, other times totally the opposite, the absence of any sensation; sometimes mental issues with swings in mood from despair to exuberance. I may be totally bewildered and unable to explain why my condition is different from one day to the next, the fact that it is degenerative and therefore changing is also a burden. Often there are feelings of guilt (Williams, 1984; Kralick et al., 2004) and the ‘why me’ expressed by others in this study (Galvin, 2002). I don’t want to tell family and friends when something is difficult. Perhaps I worry they’ll be upset because they don’t know what to do to help, or that they’ll be tired of hearing about it. Either way this reflects communication issues known to all with a chronic condition but not necessarily acknowledged by those researching such conditions (Årestedt, 2015; Sav et al., 2015).

One of the things I bring to my research, is an understanding of the difficulty in achieving improved health, an empathy for others dealing with chronic illness and an understanding of the isolation sometimes felt despite supportive conditions.

2.5 Salutogenesis

Pulling these differing strands together, incorporating approaches to managing chronic conditions, understanding and responding to co-morbidities especially effects on mental health, the Five Ways to Wellbeing (NEF., 2010) and issues around self-management and efficacy can be seen as fulfilling the salutogenic approach pioneered by Antonovsky (1979).

This approach seeks to identify the causes of health and wellbeing rather than the causes and prevention of disease (pathogenesis). Having done so it then sets out to enhance, and improve physical, mental, and social well-being (Becker et al., 2010). In effect Antonovsky was highlighting the discrepancy between the control and prevention of disease and the promotion of health and well being, that health did not come from the absence of disease rather it came from activities resulting from a different way looking at data i.e. not at those failing to manage health but those succeeding. The approach then encourages health and care practitioners to seek to understand the factors relating to success leading to recommendations for improved health outcomes.

Adopting a salutogenic perspective is about health creation (Cowley & Billings, 1999). Individuals engage in activities that enable them to improve their own health and wellbeing while also managing existing conditions and preventing onset of further difficulties. This matches the calls by the

European Commissioner for Health and Consumer Protection, for a change in emphasis from treating ill health to promoting good health (Byrne, 2004).

At the core of the salutogenic approach is the sense of coherence. This reflects a person's view of life and their capacity to respond to stressful situations. It is also about our own ability to recognise our internal and external resources and use them in a way that promotes health and well-being (Eriksson & Lindström, 2006).

Beute and Kort (2014) reflected on the salutogenic effects of the environment and of nature connection, recognising the effects of nature and daylight on stress, mood, executive functioning and self-regulation, and mental and physical health. This recognition and development of resources is a core element in the strengthening of individual resilience, the ability to cope, to adapt and thrive when circumstances change and which the nature based mindfulness approach seeks to develop with participants.

2.6 On Mindfulness, Buddhist roots and modern applications

*I think I was more naturally mindful,
during my childhood years.
When I'd take the time to stop
and look at the light that gleamed on the water.
Or the long grass blowing on the fields.*

Rose

Participant on a MBCT for Cancer Programme

2.6.1 Overview

Mindfulness based approaches (MBAs) are gaining wider recognition in physical, mental and emotional healthcare provision. Mindfulness itself and its application within these approaches is at the core of this research, so it is important to address issues of meaning and philosophy. For some, mindfulness may have little meaning. In fact in some cultures there is no word for mind or mindfulness and certainly it is not a word that many frequently use. This chapter therefore looks at what is meant by mindfulness and how and why it can contribute towards health and wellbeing.

Indeed, this chapter goes further by reflecting on the origins of mindfulness, whether they are subsumed or ignored in modern practice and questions whether there is room to incorporate those traditional elements that have perhaps been allowed to fall away in order to satisfy a demand (Batchelor, 2016). In doing so I recognise how interconnection and

understanding mutual causality (Macy, 1998) can make the modern approaches more effective without changing their secular nature.

2.6.2 Introduction

Although emanating from a Buddhist tradition more than 2500 years old, mindfulness practice has been influenced by other contemplative schools including Christianity, Islam and Taoism (Khong, 2009; Tan, 2011; Mirdal 2012). In the context of nature based mindfulness practices there is also a strong affinity to aboriginal, and other traditional cultures that claim to cultivate a deep connection with the earth, nature and all aspects of the wider environment (Henderson & Vikander, 2007; Kampfhammer, 2012; Macy, 2012). The key though is not the meditation or other practices, of which there are many, but what mindfulness is and how it helps.

All we experience is preceded by mind,

Led by mind, made by mind.

Speak or act with a peaceful mind

And happiness follows like a shadow that never leaves

Dhammapada Chapter 1, Verse 2

The term mindfulness is based on the meanings of the Pali words ‘Sati’ and ‘Smrti’, which are awareness, attention, (Sangharakshita, 2004) and remembering (Lochtefeld, 2002). These words are from the Hindu, Vedic and Buddhist traditions and do not translate directly to the modern secular

definition of Mindfulness of which a commonly used form is ‘paying attention, in the present moment, non-judgementally’ (Kabat-Zinn, 1990).

 **PERSONAL REFLECTION**

Based on many years of Buddhist study and practice, I feel that the commonly used secular translation ignores a number of issues; particularly concerning the original meaning of ‘remembering’. These were the traditional teachings of impermanence, and conditionality, that are at the heart of the Buddhist teaching of *paticca-samuppada* included in the *Satipatthana Sutta* or the Buddha’s discourse on the four foundations of mindfulness, (see chapter 1, table 1). Sometimes referred to as conditioned co-production or dependent origination (Macy, 1991) I believe this is a key issue in the development of mindfulness and one that I am aware of that certainly influences my own personal and teaching practice and therefore the direction of my research.

The understanding of conditionality, the appreciation of our connectedness to all things, is, it can be argued, why the Buddhist practice of mindfulness is also underpinned by practices of kindness, generosity, truthfulness and contentment (Gethin, 2011). Some feel that there are dangers in divorcing

mindfulness from its roots (Grossman & Van Dam, 2011; Brazier, 2013; Bazzano, 2015), which is seen to be happening in an attempt to remove the ‘Buddhist’ context from modern mindfulness teaching (Grossman & Van Dam, 2011). My experience is that teachers seeking to remove such context are those concerned with applications of mindfulness into specific areas such as health and business and while their approach can be described as secular, it can be one that is divorced from, even denying, Buddhist roots (Van Gordon et al., 2016). One author in particular questions this, asserting that the secularisation movement is making mindfulness practice palatable but at great cost (Bazzano, 2015). This may be in an attempt to gain acceptance within health service and other funded provision (Marx, 2015).

I feel the issues of impermanence and conditionality need not be raised explicitly, rather they are implied in teaching others. In more than ten years of teaching mindfulness in health contexts I have never explained the core Buddhist foundations to any group, yet groups have referred to integrity and authenticity seen through my teaching and practice and this is then reflected in their own experience.

2.6.2 Understanding mindfulness

When Jon Kabat-Zinn developed Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) he was at pains to ensure the intervention was grounded within what he described as a ‘universal dharma’ (dharma does not have a precise

definition or translation in the West but is often regarded as a path or teaching), one that recognised the roots of mindfulness but wasn't constrained by historical, cultural and religious aspects of traditional approaches (Kabat-Zinn, 2011). In removing such constraints, he emphasised the need for teachers of MBAs to embody and draw from the traditional approach without the need to utilise its traditional language. Hence whilst I will draw on specific models from the Buddhist tradition in this chapter, I use the words in common circulation (predominantly UK English) to describe their use in current contexts.

It would have been simple if the words in the Dhammapada or discourse on the sayings of the Buddha (Byrom, 1993) and attributed to the historical Buddha Shakyamuni, were easily followed. They suggest mindfulness is relatively straightforward, as some of the verses from the chapter on the mind in the Dhammapada shown below illustrate (table 3).

Table 3: selection of verses from the chapter on mind in the Dhammapada
(verses selected and interpreted by the author)

Verse	Interpretation
As the fletcher whittles and makes straight his arrows so the master directs his straying thoughts	Just as a craftsman can work with raw materials to produce the perfect product so someone skilled in mindfulness can understand thoughts that come and go and some will require effort to enable you to maintain perspective.
Like a fish out of water stranded on the shore thoughts thrash and quiver for how can they shake off desire	Thoughts can seem to have a life of their own and the ability of the skilled practitioner is not that their mind is empty but that they are able to recognise how they may feed the thought by giving it more attention.
They tremble, they are unsteady they wander at will it is good to control them and to master them brings happiness	Thoughts can be fleeting though sometimes people worry that thoughts are continually nagging away, adding to their impact. Mindfulness practice leads to the ability to see thoughts as having little substance unless we endow them with such.
But how subtle they are how elusive the task is to quieten them and by ruling them to find happiness	Sometimes thoughts have a way of niggling away, just think of when you've wondered if you've locked the door or turned some water off. By learning to let thoughts settle without showing them attention we are less worried, are happier.
With single-mindedness the master quells his thoughts he ends their wandering seated in the cave of the heart he finds freedom	By settling the mind, what one participant described as "letting his mind be a nicer place to be" we learn to have space to appreciate life more.
How can a troubled mind understand the way? If a man is disturbed He will never be filled with knowledge	Many with chronic illness know how active our minds are even if our bodies aren't. We ruminate, catastrophise, wonder what if? If only. In doing this we miss all the other things that are going on.
An untroubled mind No longer seeking to consider what is right and what is wrong a mind beyond judgements watches and understands	As we've seen practicing being non judgemental helps us avoid attachment, helps avoid blame, we simply see things as they are, full of potential according to our response
Your worst enemy cannot harm you as much as your own thoughts unguarded but once mastered no one can help as much	It doesn't matter what our condition is, our thoughts will influence how we deal with it. By becoming mindful we will be able to respond effectively.

Expanding on table 4, the core of which is that when we regularly practice mindfulness we develop the ability to recognise that we often imbue thoughts with a life of their own, dwelling on them (Raes & Williams, 2010), giving them substance. By recognising and understanding this we are able to train ourselves to shift our mode of attention, be kinder to ourselves and ultimately be more effective and resilient.

More recent developments in the secular world of mindfulness are the adaptation of practices to include such areas as kindness and compassion (Gilbert, 2010). Indeed qualified teachers are being offered courses in areas such as mindfulness self-compassion and compassionate mind training (Germer, 2009; Desbordes et al., 2012). I would argue that both areas have been there all along, especially among mindfulness teachers that recognise the Buddhist roots of their practice. So in seeking to understand how such inclusive mindfulness practice can help address issues of health and wellbeing it is useful to further examine the modern definition.

‘Paying attention’ is to practice awareness and for some this is what mindfulness means, simply awareness (Grossman, 2011). Unfortunately, as will be seen, if this is the only meaning, the potential value of mindfulness practice is lost; it is possible to be aware in a particular moment, the key is to be aware intentionally and continually. Many meditation practices focus on developing the degree of awareness whether of the body, the breath,

thoughts, feelings and emotions or examining issues such as reactivity (Allen et al., 2006). The tendency to catastrophise¹ when noticing a recurrent pain or situation is an example of a reaction that can be helped by awareness practice (Doran, 2009) especially when the practice is on traditional foundations showing that whatever we experience changes and is always connected to other areas of life (Brown et al., 2007).

‘In the present moment’ is about being in the ‘here and now’, described by Tesson (2013) as ‘between longing and regret is the present’. Thoughts can mean that people are often also unconsciously preoccupied with past or future events ‘my illness means I won’t sleep tonight’, ‘I used to be able to go running and now it is too painful’. People who are depressed often feel regret, sadness, or guilt about the past (Germer, 2009), and people who have anxiety or panic attacks worry about the future (see 8.7 April’s story). Breath meditation practices are valuable here as we can only focus on our current breath. Nature connected practices also focus on the present moment, involving people noticing what is around them as the seasons, the light, and the weather changes (Coleman, 2006). Such changes may be specific e.g the colour of leaves, or perceptual, the fact we are viewing from a different spot, feel cold, are tired. Developing an appreciation of change involves noticing that one moment differs from the next, not just in nature but in our own lives. Nature connectedness often involves activities

¹ View or present a situation as considerably worse than it actually is: *traumatic experiences can predispose people to catastrophise. Oxford English Dictionary*

outdoors (though not necessarily so) and while we seek to be ‘in the moment’ this may involve a degree of planning to ensure the ability to walk or be outside for a period. In this way those living with a chronic condition and practicing mindfulness may remove a resistance to concepts such as ‘pacing’², through seeing that such concepts are not about restricting behaviour rather enabling it (Burch & Penman, 2013).

The term ‘non-judgmental’ is a reflection of our modern tendency to see everything from a dualistic perspective – me and you, good or bad, pleasant or unpleasant. Brazier (2003) argues that for those facing difficulties this results in a withdrawal from interconnected life, an argument also made by Buddhist teacher Sangarakshita (2003) who along with Brazier, promotes the need to seek a non-dualistic or more accepting path. Developing this path, they suggest that this non-judging, enables people to feel less blame (the question ‘why me?’) and can enable the degree of acceptance needed in order to progress on a route to self-management of a condition.

However it is important to reflect on being ‘non-judgmental’ not as something to be avoided, rather for it to be also held within a context which would emanate naturally from a traditional practice that included kindness, generosity and understanding of conditionality. Inclusion of these elements is reflected in an understanding of the traditional Buddhist

² The keeping of diaries in order to identify causes of pain, stress and tension and then avoid them

teaching on the Brahma Viharas (Sangharakshita, 2004; Johansson et al., 2013) which translates as the sublime states (table 4) or the pure places to dwell or live. As these states are attributes of unselfish care, friendliness and goodness, they are surely a suitable aspiration for any mindfulness practitioner (Cullen, 2011)..

Table 5 - The Bramha Viharas or sublime states
(interpretation by the author)

Sublime State	Interpretation in the context of mindfulness
Kindness	Bringing to mind what kindness is, how we feel when people are kind to us, when we are kind to others, the physical, mental, emotional responses and experiences we have. While there may be an element of thinking about the future, after all what we wish for ourselves and others is to be happy, the aim is to embody these feelings into everyday life, recognising how we are acting and whether kindness to ourselves and others emanates from that action.
Compassion	The way our society is evolving e.g. Thatcher's statement that there is no such thing as society only individuals (from an interview in Woman's Own 1987) compassion can be seen as a weakness. So people may become self critical, feeling they are wrong when experiencing suffering, asking why me? Mindfulness practice that includes the development of compassion to self and others helps us be confident, 'comfortable in my own skin' as one participant expressed it. It helps us build relationships and become stronger physically and mentally.
Joy	That our practice in seeking out, noticing our experience, allows us to practice empathy not just to others but to ourselves. As one programme participant expressed it - she felt it was the first time she had ever felt "it was OK to be me".
Equanimity	In the context of chronic illness, being able to hold the concepts of loss and gain, pain and pleasure, pleasant and unpleasant side by side. Not trying to distinguish one from the other, grasping after one, being averse to another rather seeing that our experience is what it is, allowing the mind to become tranquil rather than agitated.

In being mindful and aiming to be non-judgmental about our moment by moment experience, we are being accepting of the body and feelings that are occurring. But we may respond to experience with judgement because within our response lies the desire to change, to overcome suffering and achieve happiness, for example we may recognise that certain thought patterns cause discomfort so we accept why these occur but act to limit the impact of their occurrence of these patterns in the future (Mahabodhi, 2015).

Each of these areas are reflections of the Buddhist teaching of the Eightfold path, or Majjhima patipada, the middle way (table 5).

Table 5: The eightfold path

(Stages and elements (Sangharakshita, 2003) interpretation by author)

Progressive stages	Path elements	Interpretation
Development of Wisdom	Right Vision	The vision is of the way life constantly changes and includes suffering as well as pleasure, and that following the path is the way to overcome suffering. This could be labelled as acceptance.
	Right Emotion	Committing oneself fully to pursuing the path
Practicing or living by values and ethics	Right Speech	Not just being truthful but speaking in a helpful and positive manner, including self-talk something important for self-management.
	Right Action	Living ethically, this means following basic values such as generosity and kindness
	Right Livelihood	Working in a way that is beneficial, that doesn't cause harm (see case studies)
Mindfulness or Concentration	Right Effort	This is application, how we make an effort to focus on thoughts, words and deeds that do not cause ourselves greater suffering. Aspects of positive psychology can be seen in right effort.
	Right Mindfulness	Being fully aware of ourselves, others and the world around us
	Right Concentration (or Meditation)	Developing the mind to be equanimous, that is calm and composed

It is important at this stage to emphasise that in discussing the Buddhist roots of Mindfulness and my sense that secularisation, a distancing from these roots, causes a weakening of the practices, I am not suggesting as Kabat-Zinn is reputed to have said, that there is a ‘new lineage of Buddhism’ (Bazzano, 2015) instead I am emphasising that Mindfulness is *not* Buddhism nor should there be a fear of it leading to a subversive introduction to Buddhism (Chisholm, 2015). Rather that when mindfulness is explored and practiced it retains the essential philosophy that makes it effective (Brazier, D. 2015).

So whatever definition we use, mindfulness starts in developing this moment by moment, non-judgmental awareness and engaging with the original meanings, being aware of ourselves, of others, of our environment, our responsibilities, actions and consequences. It is not necessarily sitting quietly (Fig. 1) or being deep in thought, though these may obviously be helpful. Importantly, it is how we make and how we demonstrate our own connections to all around us, animate and inanimate, our own awareness; including awareness of ourselves and how we enthuse those we live and work with to do the same (Frantz et al., 2005).

Those working in mainstream healthcare settings may recognise that there has been tremendous growth in therapies linking to mindfulness such as Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) (Kabat-Zinn, 1990), Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) (Segal et al., 2002),

Mindfulness Based Pain Management (MBPM) (Burch, 2008) even Mindful Leadership (Carroll, 2007). Mindfulness Based CBT approaches are, as already mentioned, included within the treatment guidelines set by the UK National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE, 2009) for those patients identified as currently well but with a history of three or more depressive episodes. More recently mindfulness based approaches and techniques have been included in a wide range of other activities and provision for a more diverse client base.

Within self-management programmes, the identification of personal values is important (Burke et al., 2003; Ng et al., 2012) with exercises provided for participants to discover them (“What do you want your life to stand for?”), to identify obstacles to achieving those goals (“Are you willing to openly experience what gets in your way?”) (Miller & Rollnick, 2002; Anderson, 2010). As table 6 also shows, a well-established mindfulness practice encourages us to live ethically and also emphasises how our intentions and values determine the direction our lives will take (Greenberg & Mitra, 2015).

In discussing interventions and training it is important to remember the character of mindfulness itself (Allen et al., 2006; Brown, Ryan & Cresswell, 2007; Teasdale & Chaskalson 2011). Although most of the studies identified used the Kabat-Zinn definition as a foundation (Zautra et al., 2008; Bohlmeijer et al., 2010; Chiesa & Serretti, 2011) few examined it

in terms of the ongoing effects a mindfulness practice can have (Rosenweig et al., 2010; Visted et al., 2015; Sturgeon & Zautra, 2016). If a person develops a mindfulness practice, becoming more aware and less judgmental in the process, then there will be greater impacts on their lives than on simply their perception of their illness (Chiesa & Serretti, 2011; Bawa et al., 2015; Davis et al., 2015). There are references to quality of life and mood enhancement / improvement (Cash & Whittingham, 2010; Crane et al., 2014; Bazzano, 2015) without, in most cases, a detailed interpretation of what these improvements are.

There are effects not only on the participants themselves but on the wider community, as the participants successfully completing a programme are seen to benefit in terms of their enjoyment of life and their connections to others (Roth & Robbins, 2004). In this study participants contributed to groups as diverse as youth group leadership (April), community gardening (Greta) and local radio (Maggie). Going further it is possible to see the benefits of greater objectivity, with the normal cognitive reaction to chronic illness “Will it never end?” becoming less pervasive and overwhelming. We can question whether MB techniques actually desensitise the brain to the ‘alarm’ conditions of illness and this is explored later in discussion of the evidence found in neuroscientific approaches to understanding mindfulness (3.5).

Much research on MB approaches shows that while physical perception of illness may remain unchanged the cognitive and emotional elements are significantly diminished resulting in less suffering and distress therefore a more stable daily existence (Astin, 2004; Brown et al., 2007; Doran, 2009; Cash & Whittingham, 2010; Martins, 2014).

Our modern society relies on personal consumption, the acquisition of goods and material wealth, dominant business models and growth of urban areas, often to the detriment of individual health, wellbeing and communities (Brown & Vergragt, 2015). This society is one in which we can receive constant messages that our wellbeing is influenced by our earning and therefore purchasing ability (Barrie & Jones, 2011). That buying this or that product will help us feel better and be happier, promoting selfishness and competitiveness rather than community and social responsibility (Bauer et al., 2012). The promotion of consumerist lifestyles can seem to be at odds with not only our own ethical values but with our actual physical and psychological needs (Kovel, 2002; Anderson, 2010) and is increasingly recognised as unsustainable (Brook, 2009; Brown & Vergragt, 2015).

We are becoming increasingly disconnected from our environment and each other (Hinds & Sparks, 2008). Yet we know self-management of our own health will become increasingly important as the health funding for drugs and other interventions addressing problems of lifestyle illnesses

and longer lives becomes more stretched. Practicing mindfulness can be seen to raise awareness of such a dichotomy resulting in more personal responsibility for our own health (Gilbert & Waltz 2010).

Williams (2011) suggests that the role of mindfulness practice should be to enable an individual to move, within the framework (Fig. 5), from the ‘conceptual’ always requiring stimulation (Band A), to the ‘perceptual or experiential’ where we engage more with our direct experience through our senses (Band B). By taking such steps and becoming more aware of all around us, being mindful of our contribution and our connectivity then with the convergence of mindfulness practice with medical and psychological science we can help to heal the world and ourselves (Wallace, 2007).

Fig. 5 Mindfulness training: Shifting mode of self-focus
 - from *conceptual* to *experiential*

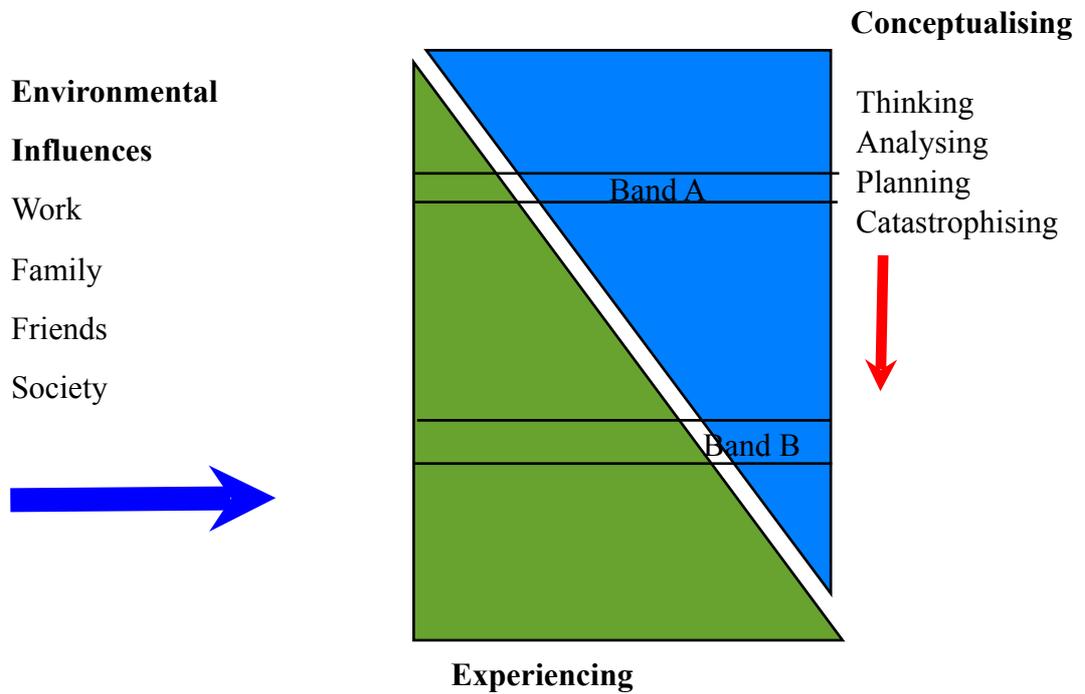


Diagram adapted from presentation by Professor Mark Williams, University of Oxford, 2010

In a key study taking the ideas of mindfulness as a therapeutic intervention further, Levesque and Brown (2007) report on their use of established tests and their own measures of autonomy to determine an individual's motivation to behave in a certain way. The study used traditional cognitive social psychology - based statistical techniques, measuring responses at controlled times (through use of pagers) and in specific conditions e.g. after set activities. Their study found that whilst mindfulness was not essential for high levels of autonomy, it was beneficial in relation to 'day

to day pressures', particularly for people lacking a high degree of personal motivation. This work though, illustrates the shortcomings of a statistical approach, which while examining day-to-day motivation does so in a manner that does not relate to the full integration of, and experience gained from, a mindfulness practice as part of one's everyday life. It was also based on a group of university students working within their course structure e.g. with a timetable so not reflecting the day-to-day activity of the 'average' person.

Mindfulness is not simply a reflective exercise nor is it solely about enabling choice; it is a way of being that enables a more responsive engagement with life. Echoing Leary and Tate's (2007) assertion that future studies should identify the effects of the components of mindfulness, my research specifically asks about the structure and role of a mindfulness practice in daily life, and seeks to identify how mindfulness practice then influences individual experiences. Heppner and Kernis (2007) suggested that further work is needed to clarify the interplay of mindfulness with feelings of self-worth, and how this interplay relates to internal and external outcomes e.g. emotional responses and connections with others. My research, focuses on the impact of mindfulness in day to day life. It involves exploring participant's perceptions of the impact their mindfulness practice has in the way they respond internally and to others.

The consistent recording of positive effects across very different participant groups indicates that MB approaches are helpful strategies to offer in the care of patients with a wide range of mental and physical health problems especially chronic pain (Burch, 2008; Doran, 2009; Gilbert & Waltz, 2010). These findings show that such approaches might enhance general features of coping with distress and disability in everyday life, as well as those specifically relating to pain and distress (Grossman et al., 2004). Other studies also demonstrate this (Bohlmeijer et al., 2010; Tamagawa et al., 2015).

As Baer (2011) points out, while there is clinical improvement, the processes of change involved are not clear and these need to be observed in daily life. The research reviewed clearly indicates that mindfulness based approaches provide the insight and coping methods needed to engage in worthwhile activities whether work or social, helping participants in regaining a degree of control for themselves and removing the fear of a life made unbearable by the thought of the consequences of illness (Walloch, 1998). However more research is needed to determine the extent to which mindfulness can lead to improvements in daily life as well as the ability to cope with symptoms.

It is this gap that my research addresses.

 **PERSONAL REFLECTION**

In common with many mindfulness teachers and ecotherapists (Flint, 2015) I use poetry in my daily practice and my teaching. It is a way of engaging the imagination, emotions, and senses. In being able to engage creatively I feel we develop more than the ability to cope, rather we engage in improving many aspects of life from resilience to communication (Gillam, 2013, Roberts, 2010). So at this stage in the chapter it felt appropriate to include a poem that is widely used by mindfulness teachers. As we discuss mindfulness, its history, its evidence base, its applications, this poem is a reminder of its simplicity.

Enough.

These few words are enough.

If not these words, this breath.

If not this breath, this sitting here.

This opening to the life

We have refused

Again and again

Until now.

Until now.

~ by David Whyte

2.6.4 Mindfulness Based Interventions or Approaches (MBI or MBA)

From the introduction of Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) by Jon Kabat-Zinn in the 1980s (Kabat-Zinn, 1990), through the development of Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) (Segal et al., 2002), which integrated MBSR with elements of cognitive therapy (CT) for depression (Beck, 1979), there are now a range of mindfulness based interventions or approaches. Whether they are called interventions or approaches may depend on our perspective, level of training or intentionality. Defining mindfulness as an intervention can depend on whether the programme is purposely offered to someone with an existing condition and with a specific outcome desired. Whereas using the term approach could indicate provision within the general population as a means of promoting wellbeing. The likelihood is that the terms will be used interchangeably according to the specific course and the intention of those delivering it. This is because we are still at an early stage within the development of the field with a wide range of people looking at how mindfulness practice can be applied and how it can be of benefit to their intended population.

There is evidence that teachers, coaches and health care practitioners are using mindfulness with a diverse range of client groups (Stanley et al., 2011; Tan, 2011; Williams & Kabat-Zinn, 2011; Krusche et al., 2013; Omid & Zargar, 2014). Most offer mindfulness skills training programmes for groups developed from the MBSR / MBCT base (Kabat-Zinn, 1990;

Segal et al., 2002). Some programmes are available as a one-to-one intervention and training in the use of MBCT as an individual therapy is also available (Pradhan et al., 2015).

Mindfulness is now taught in the West through a range of activities including meditation exercises, and the core skills are observing, describing, acting with awareness and accepting without judgment (Baer et al., 2004). In specific health areas such as relapse prevention mindfulness practice is used to help identify and prevent the elaboration of ruminative depression thought patterns. In two randomised controlled trials (Teasdale et al., 2000; Ma and Teasdale, 2004) MBCT has been shown to halve the rate of relapse in patients with three or more previous episodes of depression and has been included in the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidelines (NICE, 2009) for relapse prevention in depression. In addition to recurrent depression, mindfulness meditation has been applied to other clinical areas such as anxiety, suicidality and eating problems (Kristeller et al., 2006; Baer et al., 2004).

While the results from these studies have been positive enough to influence NICE guidelines, the evidence for all mindfulness interventions is not so conclusive. Systematic reviews indicate that while mindfulness may be effective compared to treatment as usual (TAU) or waiting list controls, for areas such as depression (Khoury et al. 2013, Goyal et al. 2014) and cancer (Cramer et al., 2012; Piet et al., 2012) it is not so positive for the treatment of physical symptoms such as pain,

endurance and mobility (Bawa et al., 2015; Lakhan & Schofield, 2013). In addition little is known about the effects mindfulness can have on adapting to living with chronic conditions (Hanley et al., 2016), an area that is examined in this research.

Bringing Mindfulness and Nature together a recent study (Lymeus, F., Lundgren, T., & Hartig, T. 2016) showed how beginners struggle to learn mindfulness skills and manage distractions. It was recognised that natural scenery may facilitate mindfulness practice. Although the outcomes of the study were positive, the research had moved little beyond Ulrich's work (1991) in that the participants were simply shown nature images rather than engaging using mindfulness exercises that involved being in contact with 'actual' nature. While the researchers anticipated that mindfulness training with tailored exercises in actual natural settings would benefit the participant's practice they felt this was for a future study. They also raised issues of using nature based activities over time, areas that are specifically addressed in this research into the use of Nature Based Mindfulness Approaches with chronic health conditions.

2.7 Summary

This chapter provided a broad overview of mindfulness and the growth of literature and development surrounding it, from its traditional underpinning in Buddhist scripture and practice through to the introduction of mindfulness based approaches and the scientific evidence of their effects. In doing so it raised issues regarding the traditional aspects of recognising and acting in awareness of our understanding of actions and consequences and our connection to each other and the world around us. This understanding and connection will be explored further in the thesis.

This chapter also raised issues regarding the training of mindfulness teachers, their personal practice and experience especially for those in therapeutic settings. My research suggests that these areas should be explored further, especially with regard to those traditional areas such as connectivity to the world around us which are understood within Buddhist practice to form a key aspect of mindfulness within our lives.

Chapter 3 - Nature, Therapeutic Connections

I am well again,

I came to life in the cool winds

and crystal waters of the mountains

John Muir, 1868

3.1 Chapter Overview

What is nature? What is a ‘natural environment’? Some people are fearful of nature, there are spiders, seas are too rough, mountains too high, weather too hot and dry, or cold and wet (Fägerstam, 2012); there is no wifi or mobile phone signal (Khavari, 2015) which may even lead to a feeling that by being ‘disconnected’ from a virtual world you may be missing out (Przybylski et al., 2013). Yet for others nature can be comforting, providing a place full of positive experiences (Brazier, 2014). For some nature is everything that isn’t them, for others it is living things, things that they don’t control (Cronon, 1996). But we’re all made of the same elements. Like other sentient beings we are part of a cycle of birth and death, so we too must be part of nature. Some would argue (Escobar, 1996; Ingold, 2011) that this means that whatever we create must therefore be natural, in just the same way a beaver builds a lodge, a bird a nest. So does that mean the roads we create and the vehicles used to drive along them are natural too? These ideas and more are explored in this chapter; not looking for a well defined theoretical model but for an understanding of nature as part of an individual’s personal experience. In doing so the chapter provides a background to how a nature based mindfulness approach helps

individuals develop a connection to ‘nature’ that in turn helps establish mindfulness into the daily life of participants.

3.2 Introduction

In discussing nature I am anxious not to fall into a purely philosophical discussion of what the word nature encompasses, how it is used and the effect that interpretation has. One of the difficulties with the word *nature* is its regular use in everyday language (Soper, 1995). Some (Totton, 2011; Jordan 2015) seeking to move away from this ease of use and lack of clarity, have taken a ‘*postnature*’ stance that posits that there is no ontological separation of man from nature (Anderson, 2010); that such a barrier doesn’t exist, is a myth we live by (Rust, 2008), and that humans, culture, mind and a distinct ‘*nature*’ are all concepts that are connected to one another, constantly changing over time. So a ‘*postnature*’ approach is one in which there is a constant interaction between humans, the non-human and place, an interaction that evolves and can be impacted on. It is then useful in the context of this research to show some of the definitions in general circulation in order to illustrate that there are different interpretations though some share certain limitations (table 6).

Table 6 - Defining nature

Illustrating some of the variety of nature definitions available

definition	author	comment
Nature is that which we observe in perception through the senses	Whitehead (1919)	Whitehead provides one of the early references to ‘sense awareness’.
Nature is a common pool resource that includes many forms of natural capital, such as wetlands, forests, and water	Rosenbloom (2012)	While not strictly a full definition this paper on the legal status of nature highlights it as being available to all, appropriated by humans for their use and that it is a depleteable resource.
Nature refers to the natural world, with an emphasis on biodiversity and ecosystems. Nature has values related to the provision of benefit to people, and also intrinsic value, independent of human experience	Diaz et al. (2015)	Although discussing intrinsic value of nature, once again humans are seen as benefiting but apart from it.
The phenomena of the physical world collectively, including plants, animals, the landscape, and other features and products of the earth, as opposed to humans or human creations.	Oxford English Dictionary	This definition excludes humans and so reinforces the idea that it that we are separate from it rather than connected to it.

The interaction highlighted by the ‘postnature’ approach and also the issues of the ‘humans as separate’ stance seen in some definitions corresponds to the discussion of mindfulness in Chapter 2, a discussion emphasising connectivity and recognising our impact. Understanding these issues and in seeking to explore nature within the context of this research, I am specifically interested in the interpretation of nature presented by the participants and then how their

view may be influenced through the use of nature based mindfulness practices. In this way I am using an ecosophical (ecological philosophy) approach that we all construct our own stories (Kail & Cavanaugh, 2015), mental models or cognitive structures (Weick, 2012) that influence how we think, behave, connect with or distance ourselves from the world around us (De Hower et al., 2013; Scholl, 2013; Mella, 2015). It is essential when delivering the individual guidance that forms part of this research study's training element that I understand the stories people live by, and how they are constructed (Stibbe, 2015). I recognise this also reflects Heidegger's view of an ontological position of plural realism in that accepting one person's view of nature, I do not have to reject others (Dreyfus, 1991).

However obvious it may appear, I suggest it is important to recall that modern human consumer society has a range of historical antecedents, including shifting cultivation and hunter-gatherers (Burns 1998), and for much of human history we existed within small group cultures (Mathew & Perreault, 2015). The difficulties we now face in terms of desire for a technological fix to problems (Ritchie, 2013; Brown & Vergragt, 2015), a desire to have more (Barrie & Jones, 2011; Bauer et al 2012), and the disconnection from nature that can be felt (Cohen 2003), can be seen as stemming from the rapid changes of the last centuries compared to the evolutionary selection process (Coyne,

2009). These rapid changes are not the only drivers of a disconnection from nature as illustrated in Figure 6.

Figure 6: Drivers of disconnection from nature



We know that an emotional attachment to our natural environment creates more self-awareness, (Nisbet et al., 2009) and a greater appreciation and valuing of interconnectedness with others (Mayer et al., 2009), including non-human species and so leads to more sustainable, pro-environmental behaviours (Gosling and Williams, 2010). Natural environments include diverse sensory stimulations, making them ideal places for working with body awareness and mindful presence as a means to restore emotional and physiological capacity (Østergaard, 2007).

3.3 Cultural Influences

Some argue that while many cultures are growing more alienated from nature, others are managing to maintain strong connections (Sandell & Ohman, 2010 (fig. 7)). The first nation Cree people of Canada use the term ‘miyupimaatisiium’ meaning ‘being alive well’ to reflect a sense of connection (Grey & Patel 2015) to all things maintained through community life, family values and care for the environment. In Scandinavia, the concept of ‘Friluftsliv’ literally free air living, is the reason many leave the cities to visit their log cabins, walk, ski, and also work to maintain their environment, recognising its restorative value (Henderson & Vikander, 2007). This is allied to the concept of ‘allemannsrett’ or every man’s right to be close to nature (Knight, 2015). For some this universal right is regarded as having a more special link, perhaps to the place of one’s birth or where you may have had a special connection such as the site of a deeper experience (Williams, 2001) links that are seen in participant responses in my research.



Figure 7: Recognising our connections to nature

Outside Western society are cultures that seem to have a greater understanding of nature, a closer relationship to it (Descola, 2013; Leonard et al, 2013) and through this stronger communities, where the human mind does not exist in separation from the natural world (Metzner, 1995) and where mental well-being essentially depends on an ability to develop a “mature” relationship with our natural surroundings. These powerful connections were also explained in a study showing that an inspirational place can inspire a person’s life, which can in turn lead to inspiration for a wider community. The definition used for an inspirational landscape was

‘A place that inspires emotional, spiritual and / or intellectual responses or actions because of their physical qualities as well as their meanings, associations, stories or history’ (Johnston & Ramsey, 2005)

What makes a place inspirational was found to have a number of indicators (Table 7).

The presence of such indicators is found in some of the reflections on the use of ‘sit spots’ by participants in this research study (Chapters 9, 10, 11).

Table 7: Indicators of inspirational landscape (adapted from Johnston & Ramsey 2005 with interpretation by the author)	
Indicator	Interpretation
Power	Landscapes can have a drama, especially in certain conditions e.g. at sunset or in a storm, that generates an emotional response.
Story	Certain landscapes may have a historical significance, nationally or locally. Areas such as the Highlands with the history of the clearances or the massacre in Glencoe, the beaches of Hastings and Normandy all inspire a story or an appreciation.
Uncommon	Landscapes which are unfamiliar may have greater impact, snow clad mountains may feel different to a city dweller compared to a hill farmer.
Defining image or creative expression	Certain features are well known, Land’s End, the white cliffs of Dover, views of the Lake District may all generate an appreciation of a particular landscape even if only viewed through the images of others.
Inspired action	Appreciation of a landscape could inspire you to revisit, to explore, or to act to protect it
Contemplative	Natural landscapes, from forests and mountains to lakes and beaches are known to aid reflection, contemplation and appreciation.
Cultural practices	The field of landscape ecology acknowledges that some landscapes help define cultural practices e.g. the hardiness of mountain dwellers while some landscapes are defined by the culture of people e.g. agriculture, the fencing or walling of fields, clearing of land etc.
Sacred	Some landscapes are known for their spiritual significance whether in formal religious practice e.g. Lindisfarne or for ancient practice e.g. stone circles.

While inspiration could provide a partial answer to crises we face relating to climate and our environment (and one should also remember that sometimes we view other cultures and their customs differently - Kastanakis, & Voyer, 2014), the climate crisis itself suggests, on the contrary, that we live in alienation from nature and with a

steadily reinforced incapacity for a healthier relationship with it (Pooley et al., 2012; Palsson et al., 2013; Ritchie, 2013).

Communities with strong natural connections can show us how to deepen the relationship between our environment and physical wellbeing and set our mental states in an ecological context (Kapfhammer, 2012), one that celebrates Thompson's (1914) 'mindful contact with the outdoor environment'. This is apparent in other research showing that outdoor experiences enhance sensory acuity (Mayer et al., 2009) with evidence that people living in cities expend effort 'blocking out' negative information such as noise, constant information of all kinds along with the volume of 'movement' whether speeding traffic or more pedestrian, the sheer numbers of people moving in the same direction (Thompson et al., 2012; Cleveland, 2014)). Such sensory activity whether enhancement or a response to blocking forms part of the teaching in the mindfulness programme on which this research is based.

With such evidence being made publicly available, it is easy to understand why the use of the outdoors as a therapeutic medium is increasing dramatically (Ulrich et al., 1991; Velarde et al., 2007; Thompson, 2011; Bratman et al., 2015b). The variety of organisations promoting the use of our natural environment ranges from Government departments such as the Department for Education and Skills (DFES, 2006) and funded bodies such as English Nature (Seymour, 2003), through to organisations representing patients themselves (Mind, 2007). There is much research available to show the effect of wilderness settings on the psyche of individuals and groups. Some shows a largely embodied 'knowing' or cognition based on the location itself and our

reflection on our place in it (Harrison, 2011), while the effect of extended time in nature especially wilderness is measured by others (Greenway, 1995; Key, 2003; Shaw, 2006). **However, despite the research there is a lack of evidence showing how it is been used effectively, evidenced in areas such as the funding cuts to many bodies from LEA outdoor centres to charities delivering programmes.**

Cognitive biophilia suggests that we use images and symbols of nature to aid communication and to help us understand our own thoughts, feelings and emotions and those of others (Lawrence, 1993). However there are some that regard the theory as provocative (Joye, Y., & De Block, 2011; Kellert, 2012) as it questions the way in which we are taught about nature, whether we are seen as dominant over it or are connected in a romanticised vision of nature (Kahn & Hasbach, 2013). For children, nature is the richest, most detailed, and most readily available informational context they are ever likely to encounter (Melson, 2013; Sandry, 2013). Many adults (including those taking part in this study) cite the outdoors as one of the most significant settings of their childhood (Chawla, 2007) and it is suggested that adults use these recollections of nature for what Wordsworth calls "tranquil restoration." (Wordsworth, 1798).

Connectedness with nature (CWN) has been defined in a number of ways, including *'an affective, experiential sense of oneness with the natural world'* (Mayer & Frantz 2004)

'a predisposition to take an interest in learning about the environment, feeling concern for it, and acting to conserve it, on the basis of formative experiences in nature' (Chawla & Derr 2012).

'a stable state of consciousness comprising symbiotic cognitive, affective, and experiential traits that reflect through consistent attitudes and behaviours, a sustained awareness of the interrelatedness between one's self and the rest of nature' (Zylstra, 2014).

It can be argued that such a sustained awareness, an appreciation of a connection to and inter-relatedness with nature means we go beyond viewing it for its 'utility value' (Bai, 2001), and instead recognise it at an emotional, sensual level, that which engages us with appreciation, fascination, wonder. Such a connection may imply a recognition of the importance of nature in itself and its right to exist without our interference. When UK forests were recently offered for sale, whilst some of those protesting may have been protecting self-interests, others were a new vanguard of environmentalism (Cox, 2012), the new face of action, brought into being by a reaction to corporate rather than community interest. Such action is now seen in areas ranging from anti-fracking and worries about over protection of corporate interests e.g. TTIP³, through to protesting damage to SSSIs by corporations. Some suggest that rather than being simply connected with nature, by expressing concern for it, we are seen to become an environmentalist⁴(Evernden, 1993; Tam, 2015).

³ TTIP - Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership

⁴ Environmentalist - first entered the Oxford English Dictionary in 1972 as 'one who seeks to ensure the preservation of the environment (from pollution, exploitation etc.)'.

Developing this idea further, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) are seeking to encourage more people, especially children, to connect with nature. They describe such a connection as comprising an enjoyment of nature, an empathy for creatures, sense of oneness and of responsibility (RSPB, 2013; Cheng & Monroe, 2012). In this research the same concept has been used in teaching activities and the terms nature, natural world and natural environment are used interchangeably by participants, reflecting their own connectedness and sense of oneness and empathy.

3.4 Environmental Issues

Over the last 50 years a growing body of evidence has developed that exposure to nature has benefits for health (Berry, 1987; Kaplan & Kaplan, 1995; Dalgard & Tambs, 1997; Burns, 1998; Berger & McLeod, 2006; Barton & Pretty, 2010; Annerstedt & Währborg, 2011; Corraliza et al., 2012; Bratman et al., 2015; Windhorst & Williams, 2015). Evidence also shows how our environment can have positive or negative effects on mental health (Allison, 2011; Thompson, 2011; Bratman et al., 2012; Thompson et al., 2012; Chen, J. et al., 2015) such as the issues of stress (Adevi & Mårtensson, 2013), depression (Yipa, 2000; Chalder et al., 2012) and emotional wellbeing (Cheng & Monroe 2012) with immediate psychological benefits or ‘Stress Recovery’ (Ulrich et al., 1991) and longer term benefits, ‘attention restoration’ (Kaplan and Kaplan, 1995). These sit alongside physiological benefits resulting from increased physical activity within nature (Pretty, 2007, Roe & Aspinall, 2011), all supporting the ‘biophilia hypothesis’ (Wilson, 1984) that closeness to nature increases well-being.

While such evidence was growing in academia the recognition of the impact of the environment on people’s lives amongst service providers was limited. Therapists themselves were being criticised for their own lack of awareness of the restorative power of nature and of the potential for ecological issues to impact on our sense of wellness (Metzner, 1991). Even just a few years ago the same argument was being made that the field of psychotherapy was ignoring the healing potential of the

outdoors (Beringer and Martin, 2003; Allison, 2011; Pilisuk & Joy, 2014), while others argued for improved quality of life through contact with nature (Henwood 2002; Smith et al., 2013; Tang et al., 2015). These arguments included topics as varied as a connection with other living things through initiatives such as zoo and urban farm programmes (Maller et al., 2002) through to improved recognition of the value of the environment in the design of our urban areas (Frumkin et al., 2004; Carpenter et al., 2015).

Despite the evidence many health professionals are simply prescribing drugs and other therapeutic interventions to alleviate symptoms (Iggulden, 2007; MacAuley et al., 2015). Others are striving to provide a technical fix to the ills of society (Trainer, 2012), arguably the type of solution that leads to a sedentary lifestyle where work is less physical and leisure time spent using technology, e.g. running on treadmills rather than in the countryside (Gluckman & Hanson 2006; Louv, 2012). Ultimately this can lead to what has been called *sedentary death syndrome* (MacAuley et al., 2015).

The industrial and technological revolutions have served to encourage a belief that there will always be this scientific or technical fix and we have developed a mechanistic view of life that is detached from the real world and that makes us feel superior to it (De & Nanda, 2015; Pandey, 2015) - possibly resulting in mindless pollution and waste of resources (Tam, 2015). Yet when a disaster occurs, such as earthquakes in Kashmir (2005), or Japan (2011), the Boxing Day tsunami (2004) and recent floods in the UK (2014 & 2015), then man realises the power of nature and its influence over his future especially that of the poor and vulnerable who are often

more badly affected (Guha-Sapir et al, 2004). So while the distancing of humans from nature cannot be disputed, it can be seen that ill health is a natural consequence of these beliefs, views and actions (Chaplin, 2010; Bird, 2012). All of these factors are leading to a more sedentary and reactive lifestyle. The fact that when we are forced to take a break due to ill health we take walks, or take part in activities (Chalder et al., 2012), means we not only feel better but we are polluting less too, and such double sided benefits, to the person and the environment, are the foundation of an ecotherapeutic approach to health (Fisher, 2013).

Significantly, while the above findings indicate that although people generally experience a sense of wellbeing when in contact with nature, the effect even from simply sitting in a garden, is much more pronounced for disabled and marginalised people, helping them to become less socially excluded through building confidence and encouraging activity (HCoN, 2004; Bratman et al., 2012; Detweiler et al., 2012; Capaldi et al., 2015; Bragg & Atkins, 2016). In addition to experiencing positive physical and psychological health improvements, they also reconnect with their communities (Donoghue & Siegel, 2000; Hirschberg, 2012, some reaching a higher level of socio-political identity (Louv, 2012; Årestedt et al., 2015; Bjørnstad et al., 2015; Eaves et al., 2015). Yet at the same time Pike and Weinstock (2013) suggest that those perceived as being ill or frail are often discouraged from undertaking activities outdoors. This is one of the key areas that I pursue within the research study, focusing as it does on those with chronic illness.

Coming back to the ‘environmental theme’ we have the statement in Roszak’s (1995) seminal work ‘Ecopsychology’ that feeling a sense of belonging to the broader natural community may be a prerequisite for increasing environmental protection. He goes on to argue that fostering ecological behaviour through expanding our sense of self, is key because ‘if the self is expanded to include the natural world, behaviour leading to destruction of this world will be experienced as self-destruction’ (Roszak, Gomes, & Kanner, 1995).

3.5 Nature Based Therapeutic Modalities

Over the last two decades there have been many studies of nature based therapies, some showing little long lasting effect (Geyer et al., 2009) others showing significant reductions in often serious health conditions (Greenway, R; 1995; Davies, 2011; Hansen-Ketchum et al, 2011; Detweiler et al., 2012; Kuo, 2015). Nature Therapy as a modality in its own right has been described as a postmodern experiential approach based on the integration of elements from a variety of therapies including Gestalt, narrative, ecopsychology, transpersonal psychology, adventure therapy, shamanism, art and drama therapy, and body-mind practices (Berger & McLeod, 2006). In this section I explore some of the discussions about what makes an approach an ‘Outdoor or Nature’ therapy and some of the distinct modalities that contribute to the field. One of the difficulties in identifying studies is that they are often reported or published in very diverse fields or journals ranging from psychoanalysis (Detweiler et al., 2012) to horticultural (Corazon et al., 2010; Adevi & Mårtensson, 2013), even equine journals. Some of the terms used can suggest, or lead to, an even wider range of interventions

not relevant to the concept of nature connectedness or mindfulness. To counter this I have focused on therapies where nature is a core component of the intervention rather than it simply providing the environment for delivery. So for example equine therapy involving the knowledge, care, connection and enjoyment of horses would be examined, the benefits of horse riding would not be included.

The research examined ranged from meta-analyses (Barton & Pretty, 2010) to individual studies (Allison, 2011) and while there are cases where significant improvements were found for varied outcomes in diverse diagnoses, ranging from obesity to post traumatic stress disorder (Annerstedt & Währborg, 2011) there is also the awareness that nature based approaches are still fringe therapies which need to become more integrated into mainstream health and social care (Lee et al., 2012), especially when the financial benefits are also recognised.

3.5.1 International Perspective

There are many areas that are being promoted as involving nature for therapeutic value (Windhorst & Williams, 2015), ranging from Bush Therapy (Australia), Wilderness Therapy (USA & Canada), Forest Therapy (Japan) (Ambrose-Oji, 2013), Farm Therapy (Sweden), Adventure Therapy (though this may be activity specific so could be indoors) (Beringer & Martin, 2003), Horticultural Therapy (Corazon et al., 2010), Animal Assisted Therapy (Antonioni & Reveley, 2005; Burgon, 2011) and many others. As will be seen in the next section, in the UK there has been much discussion about the use of terminology, what counts as wilderness? What is adventure? When is an intervention therapy and when is it therapeutic? These same discussions are happening elsewhere with qualification schemes being designed or in

place in Australia and the U.S. Although these areas are discussed here the intention is not for nature based mindfulness practice to be viewed as a therapy with teachers requiring specialist qualifications. Rather it is to recognise the therapeutic value of connecting with nature, reflecting on the developments internationally to build an evidence base for practice and through this incorporate mindfulness to form an approach that can be used within the continuum highlighted in the next section.

3.5.2 Outdoor Therapy

In 2006, a multidisciplinary forum, hosted by the University of Central Lancashire (UCLAN) and comprising representatives of influential organisations such as the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP), the United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP) and the Institute of Outdoor Learning (IOL) met to discuss the evolution of Outdoor Therapy within the UK. While it was recognised that there were many areas of common ground amongst a group of practitioners working along a continuum of provision ranging from clinical based psychotherapy to forest based outdoor recreation providers, there was a need to reach a clearer service definition that would recognise and aid the development of the field (Johnson 2015a). It was also recognised that there were extensive areas of overlap (figure 8).

These areas included the fact that, regardless of the person leading the intervention, the clients always have a range of issues to deal with, from their identity, background and beliefs, to their fears and hopes. In delivering an intervention the therapist, in the case of this research the mindfulness teacher, may move from one segment to another (Berman & Berman, 2013), sometimes using an activity purely for recreation (such as

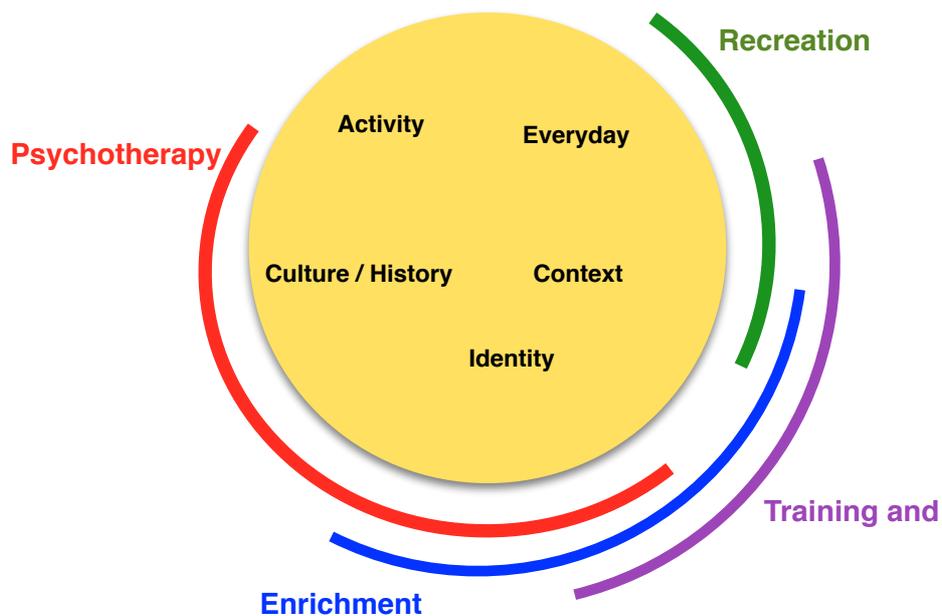


Fig. 8 Scope of Outdoor Therapy

(Johnson, 2012).

a mindful walk in the countryside), at other times for the lessons that may be learned from it (such as reflection on a period at a ‘sit spot’) (Young et al., 2010). Always seeking to ensure the intervention is effective for the clients. Another way of portraying this concept visually is as a simple sliding scale as shown below (Fig. 9).

Figure 9 Scale of intervention

Point on scale determined by intention, ability or wishes of clients



(Johnson 2012)

In fact the clients will themselves move between the segments as their own experience, sense of themselves, confidence in practice and achievement, even mood on the day changes. The overlap between psychotherapeutic intervention and enrichment was deemed especially significant as both are therapeutic and it is the intention of the therapist (and/or client seeking help) that makes the difference. This is an area highlighted more than two decades ago in papers on Nature Guided Therapy (Burns, 1998) and still being explored today.

The definition finally arrived at for Outdoor Therapy (Johnson, 2015) was that it:

- Uses a process of supported self-discovery (Grof, 1988) to promote wellbeing and change.
- Has some experience that takes place out-of-doors (recognition of interconnection to the environment and universal themes) (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1995).
- Recognises the outdoor place is an active component in the therapeutic process and that this process involves components such as place, experience and reflection (Hinds & Sparks, 2008).
- Understands that reflection (not reviewing) for the therapist and the client is an integral part of the process and that these reflective processes include what is happening for the therapist/ practitioner, the client and their relationship to the outdoor place (Greenaway & Knapp, 2015).

I use this definition as it provides for a broad range of interventions suitable to meet the needs of clients and also emphasises the importance of reflection, a key activity if

the intervention is to help foster mindfulness in general and a specific understanding of how a nature based approach to mindfulness impacts on daily life in particular. In addition my practice is also underpinned by the modalities described below (3.5.3 - 3.5.5).

3.5.3 Attention Restoration Therapy

Unlike other species, we know that as humans we can be attentive in different ways. We have the ability to use our senses, physical and emotional responses to determine what may be attractive, important, dangerous or even boring in ways that allow us to respond rather than react to situations (Norton & Pettegrew, 1979; Cachel, 2006). We use phrases such as ‘that caught my eye’ or ‘captured my attention (Abram, 2010)

When we make an effort to be attentive to something in a deliberate way, often sustained over a period of time, such as when a task needs to be completed, then this deliberate attentiveness, to something we choose is known as ‘voluntary’ (Morse, 2015; Herzog et al., 2003) or ‘directed’ attention (Kaplan, 1995). However our attention can also be drawn to other areas even when we’re engaged in complex activities. Such capturing of our attention, described as an ‘involuntary’ process is thought to require less effort (Morse, 2015) as we are attracted to something that holds greater interest. This could be something we’ve not noticed before, or echoing findings from evolutionary psychology (Wright, 1994), something that instigates a fight or flight response such as movement, a wild animal, or things that engage our senses such as an unfamiliar (or engaging) smell, sound or sight. Such involuntary attentional focus could therefore result from anything that may hold our fascination for a time, no matter how short. This understanding can be useful in recognising why

simple attention to the breath in any given moment can provide a focus for a ‘breathing space’ during an activity and why by being in the moment which are able to maintain interest as each moment is different or changing in relation to other moments.

In seeking to understand why anyone should prefer to be outdoors and why they benefited from activity, solitude, even stillness from such an environment, Kaplan and Kaplan (1995) sought to identify the underlying principles of such engagement. In work that complemented that of Ulrich’s (1991) Stress Reduction Theory (SRT) or how green space can influence recovery from physical and mental stress, they developed this concept of ‘Attention Restoration Theory’ (ART) (table 8), in doing so describing the inherent restorative qualities of looking at or being in certain natural and urban landscapes (Hartig et al., 2003; Dettweiler et al., 2012; Adevi & Mårtensson, 2013).

These factors are reflected in the design of activities within the Nature Based Mindfulness Approach.

Table 8: Key factors of Attention Restoration Therapy (ART)

(Factors (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1995), interpretation by the author)

Factor	Interpretation of the factor applied in this research
Being away	The act of taking oneself to a different place to that normal to one's daily life, the ability to enjoy a different 'space'. This does not have to be a visit to a wild or remote place, it can simply be different to normal hence the use of the 'sit spot' within the naturally mindful programme. It is a place where we can notice without restriction.
Fascination	The ability of the 'space' to attract one's interest longer than a similar time spent in other environments. Some of these are more gentle experiences e.g. the sunset that happens everyday, the leaves rustling in the breeze, these things that can hold our attention but don't need to be dramatic. They are all around us so our practice is to have the space to notice them
Variety or extent	The ability of the landscape in question to not only capture one's attention but to have the depth and variety to sustain it. This is simple when faced with a dramatic view, but closer to home we may experience extent through other connections too, such as historical connections, previous experience, or more creatively with a wide range of colours and textures being apparent e.g a rock garden.
Connection or compatibility	The ability of the individual to feel at ease in the landscape, to feel they are part of it, even to feel they belong in it, leading to a caring for it.

3.5.4 Ecopsychology

Human nature has changed throughout history and ecopsychology has developed in direct response to where we are now as a modern society (Schultz, 2002). It builds on several areas of thought. Environmentalists (Sellers, 1999; Tesch & Kempton 2004), those who are concerned with the future of the planet, tend to operate at a macro level, tending to think on global terms, acting very publicly because their subject is one that should concern everyone. Environmental campaigners even using phrases such as *'think global, act local'* to imply that our local actions are necessary to a global future (Stratford, 2004). Whereas psychology or psychotherapy tends to concern itself at a micro level, one to one or intimate groups and often tends to be very private and perhaps introspective, Ecopsychology brings these two areas, environment and psychology, together (Milton & Corbett 2011). It does so by seeking to meet individual needs and encouraging individuals to meet the needs of our wider community (De Young, 2013) including the natural environment, something that was clearly expressed in the landmark 1990 conference 'Psychology as if the whole earth mattered', where participants concluded that

"If the self is expanded to include the natural world, behaviour leading to the destruction of this world will be experienced as self destruction"

(Roszak et al., 1995)

While one participant observed further that

"The illusion of separateness we create in order to utter the words "I am", is part of the problem in the modern world..... To preserve nature is to preserve the matrix through which we can experience our souls and the soul of planet Earth" (ibid)

As the quote above demonstrates, practitioners had been discussing ideas for some years before Ecopsychology was introduced to the wider public in 1995 (Roszak, 1995). It was shown to use a different language to traditional psychology, a language from the world that made us rather than from the world we've created.

Ecopsychology practices help in overcoming alienation from the natural world that was discussed earlier. They involve recognition of everything that has contributed to our modern day lifestyles and perceptions being what they are (Fisher, 2013). They expand on the philosophy that we are only human in relation to the non human (Abrams, 2010) moving us back to our true state as Homo sapiens rather than what is described as Homo economicus - a state where we exist to consume, operating only to maximise self interest (Kovel, 2002). In other words by melding the environmental view with the psychotherapeutic view we come to remove some boundaries. We recognise that some of the issues that cause us stress, make personal lives difficult can result from global changes. Likewise our personal sense of wellbeing can be affected by taking action that is beyond the personal, involves groups, local and wider society. So the phrase 'psychology as if the whole world matters' used in the Harvard conference (para 1 above) reflects the sense that the more our world is damaged, the more damaged we become. It is this sense that ecopsychology addresses.

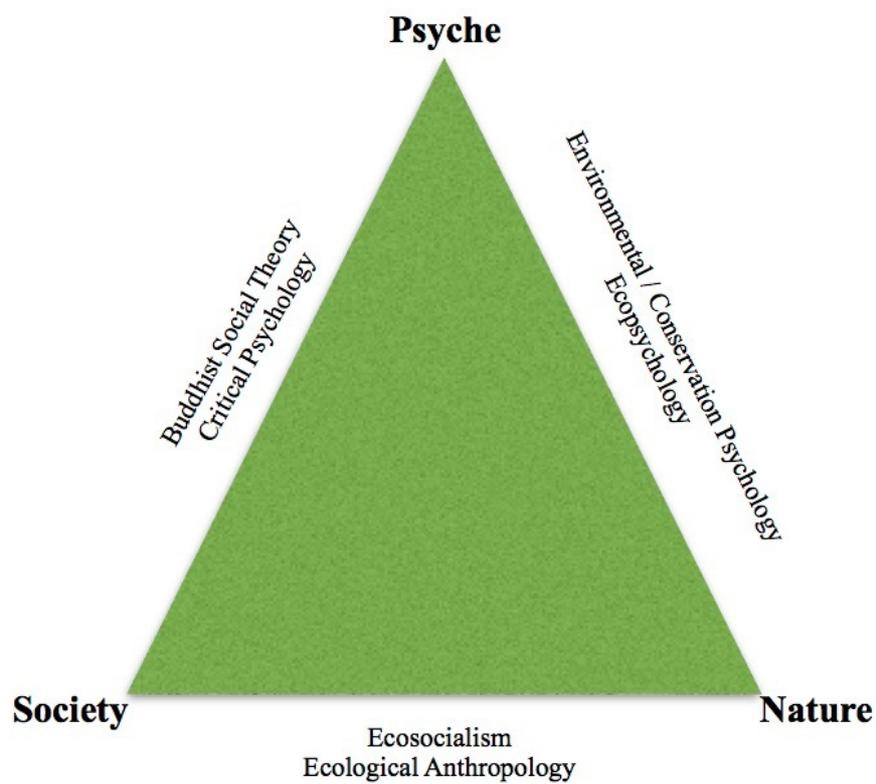
3.5.4.1 Ecotherapy

Ecotherapy is sometimes referred to as applied ecopsychology (Buzell & Chalquist, 2009) and it refers to both the healing and growth, personal and beyond the individual, that is nurtured by healthy interaction with the earth (Clinebell, 1996). It uses principles of ecopsychology which examine how our environmental condition influences how we think and feel (Roszak et al., 1995). The aim is to identify goals of the patient/client and how a programme of activity that allows time and space for connection with nature and our wider environment (including other people) can be of benefit. The benefits of Ecotherapy are recorded in a wide range of academic journals, research papers (Mind, 2007) with one joint English Nature and Mind publication being launched at a major NHS conference (Seymour, 2003).

Ecotherapy is also often used as a generic term for a wide range of nature or outdoor based interventions ranging from community farming to green exercise programmes (Smith, 2013) though in the strictest sense referred to above it is usually taken to involve building a relationship to whatever we refer to as nature and contributing to its welfare (Brazier, 2013). This of course raises issues about how much we are affected by our view of nature and the environment including how we perceive our role in its protection (Randall, 2005; Brazier, 2011). This will be seen in the responses of some of the participants in this study. Once again it is important to recognise that there will be differences in both approaches and outcomes in relation to the ‘active’ components of ecotherapy, an area already highlighted in the section on

outdoor therapy (Sempik et al., 2010). A further example of the differences and approaches can be seen through the lens of integration, how practices link different aspects of our world (Fisher, 2013, Fig. 10).

Fig. 10 The integration challenge for Ecopsychology



(Fisher, 2013)

3.5.5 Shinrin - Yoku

Shinrin - Yoku is a practice which is gaining a heightened profile around the world, especially as national forest services recognise their role in meeting the wellbeing needs of their users. It specifically incorporates mindfulness, sense awareness and health activities within forests and so relates directly to my research and specifically to the additional nature based practices taught to participants. In fact my work in this area is referred to in a recent report for the UK Forestry Commission (Ambrose - Oji, 2013).

Shinrin - Yoku which is often translated as forest bathing, has been a formal initiative in Japan since 1982 when it was launched by the Japanese Forest Service as a means to encourage the use of forests for health and relaxation. It has been well researched over the last ten years with a number of published papers including one meta- analysis that clearly demonstrates the success of various Shinrin - Yoku programmes (Tsunetsugu et al., 2013). However it is important to note that this is not a recent initiative, there are other examples such as the concept 'waldeinsamkeit' the idea of being alone in the woods and at one with nature (Carlile, 2015) and the Kurparks of Germany (De Wit, 2014) which have been in use since the 1850s to encourage walking and sitting in specially created, often municipal forests, some linked to natural springs and spas.

A distinct aspect of forest bathing (which does include forest walking) is the deliberate encouragement to engage all the senses, something that has become one of the core elements of the naturally mindful programme used in this research study. In fact there have been a number of studies that examine the role of specific senses within the forest bathing / walking therapeutic models and show the impact these have (Katsumata et al., 2003; Tsunetsugu et al., 2010; Mao et al., 2012). Although widely viewed as beneficial some studies do not reflect the same levels of success, for example there was little evidence of long term benefits in hypertension (high blood pressure) in one study (Mao et al, 2012) though these effects were noticed in others (Morita et al, 2007; Park et al., 2010; Lee et al., 2014).

The concepts involved in Shinrin Yoku are becoming more widely used and a recent study (Ambrose - Oji, 2013), identified a total of 16 different programmes operating throughout the UK. These ranged from programmes funded by organisations such as Forestry Commission Scotland and the NHS through to individual charities and commercial activities. As such it is felt that the more mindfulness and nature initiatives emerge, the more the value of woods and forests will be recognised for health and wellbeing purposes. Certainly mindfulness and nature practices such as Shinrin-Yoku represent creative ways to engage with initiatives such as the Five Ways to Wellbeing framework as well as meeting agendas on health economics. In 2015 funding was provided to provide specially carved benches for forest bathing within the Galloway Forest.

3.5.6 Issues around nature based therapies

While the evidence base for nature based therapies is substantial and growing, there are some issues that practitioners should be aware of. Although some recognise the historical context of nature as a therapeutic medium (Burns, 1998; MacKinnon, 2012) others see it being a relatively immature field (Berger, 2009) though one that is developing rapidly. Some argue that this immaturity contributes to it being seen as an alternative or ‘new age’ therapy (Snell et al., 2011) rather than a valuable and cost effective contribution to mainstream healthcare (Rajan, 2005), one that can be incorporated into other interventions (Seymour, 2003; Berger & McLeod, 2006; Sandal & Ohman, 2010).

A key issue that was reflected on throughout this study is the longevity of results.

Many outdoor or nature based experiences, whether formal residential educational programmes or more recreational activities can be seen to have benefits that are short lived (Greenway, 1995; Warden, 2015). Sometimes this is due to the lack of follow up or the lack of opportunity or impetus to continue practice or seeking out of further opportunities. These effects are discussed in Section 5.3.

Understanding these issues and those identified by Gorowitz & MacIntyre (1976) influenced the design of this study and the practices and support given to participants, again these are discussed in Chapter 7 onwards.

3.6 Summary

This chapter has illustrated how nature, the world around us and of which we are part, can have an effect on our health, and while there are many studies showing the importance of physical activity (Chawla, 2007; Withington, 2011; Chen-Hsuan Cheng & Monroe, 2012; Rączaszek-Leonardi et al., 2013; RSPB, 2013; Sandry, 2013; Duncan et al., 2014; Staiano et al., 2015) these tend to focus on the young and healthy adults leaving a gap which this study focusing on nature based mindfulness for self-management of chronic illness seeks to address as the therapeutic intent of the mindfulness and nature based practices are supported by constant practice of the participant, some of which comes through enrichment activities such as walking through, sitting in and noticing the natural world around us.

In the following chapter this understanding is built on to demonstrate how appreciation of and identification with nature can be incorporated into mindfulness practice and how that practice then becomes relevant to an individual's daily life and sense of wellbeing.

Chapter 4 - Coming to Our Senses: daily life, chaos and complexity

Dawn awakening

Wood pigeons calling, calling,

sun burning the mist

Traditional Haiku

4.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter, reflecting the title and content of a book on mindfulness of the same name (Kabat-Zinn, 2005) draws together issues raised in previous chapters, alongside detail to show how the Nature Based Mindfulness Approach used in the research study incorporates the essence of mindfulness practice from Buddhist and secular clinical contexts. It develops the integration of nature and therapeutic elements to provide a programme that can be widely used for different client populations, one that emphasises a daily connection to ‘nature’ in whatever way participants choose to understand it, a programme that will build coping and resilience allowing greater self-efficacy in the management of their conditions.

4.2 Introduction

As seen in the previous chapter Outdoor Therapy and Ecopsychology interventions often include practices that are reflective and develop awareness. These are key elements that are also aspects of mindfulness approaches. One particular practice is known as the Vision Quest (Young et al., 2010). Most Quests tend to follow a similar format of identifying issues that the participant brings to the Quest, preparation, travel to the remote area, time alone (often including fasting), return to the group, and reflection and reporting to others in the group and facilitators. Within these activities it is possible to identify three key stages (Foster & Little, 1996) (table 9). The description of each stage illustrates behaviours and issues that relate equally to mindfulness training and Vision Quest experiences.

Table 9. Key stages of a Vision Quest (based on Foster & Little 1986 with description by the author)	
stage	description
Severance	Perhaps letting go of beliefs and attitudes we hold. Certainly leaving behind our comforts, the behaviours we are familiar with, the support mechanisms we have and people we know and care about.
Threshold	Being awake to the world around us. Realising how we can change and also what is important to us
Reintegration	Bringing what has been learned back into our daily lives, seeking to integrate our experience into our everyday existence. This includes how we live with whatever issues, conditions or illness we have or face, communicating with others, family, friends and colleagues and building our new found knowledge and understanding into future plans.

When we examine these stages it is possible to see that they are also the archetypal patterns that can be seen in any heroic story (Pearson, 2013), such as those of Ulysses, Beowulf and others (Hourihan, 1997). They are also seen on any personal journey of significance: letting go of the familiar, the normal envelope of our experience being pushed or challenged, and the implementing, incorporating our new found knowledge both for ourselves and others (Campbell, 1968). We see the patterns in stories and myths that have been passed through generations (Shaw, 2011) as well as more everyday patterns such as the journey of the apprentice, starting by contracting, agreeing to undertake a path, following instruction, gaining knowledge and becoming the journeyman, someone who can apply the knowledge and eventually progressing to full integration of knowledge and skills to become the master (Calvert, 2014).

This is a similar pattern for those undertaking a training in mindfulness. Here we can expand the stages, introducing two additional elements familiar to some Quests, those of 'Darkness' and 'The Calling' (Anderson, 2010). 'Darkness' corresponds to the sense of something missing, the absence of light in a persons' sense of wellbeing, perhaps even a sense of desperation; while 'The Calling' relates to the knowledge that another path, another opportunity exists with the choice to follow it or not, a choice which has been described as choosing to live life as if it really mattered (Kabat-Zinn, 1990).

Those attending a mindfulness (or other self-management programmes e.g. relapse prevention) will have gone through these stages, even when referred to a programme by a GP or specialised service such as a pain management unit. Participants may have tried medication and attending clinics, they will have explored various avenues, and

they will have felt desperate to regain control of their lives (Daggenvoorde et al., 2013). Then someone, whether a health professional, friend or patient with similar needs, talks to them about the opportunity, perhaps helping them explore options (Fountain et al., 2007). They will agree to attend classes, to practice at home, to leave behind preconceptions, to accept where their lives, conditions, illnesses currently are. Once on a course or programme the fact that participants gain personal insights and understanding seems unequivocal. Participants recognise that what is being taught works (Weinstein et al., 2013). In group settings what participants hear from others reinforces this belief (Lynall & Jordan, 2009). They have clarity of purpose, a new sense that they can manage their lives. With this new motivation participants talk about a desire to initiate change within their lives (Paulson et al., 2013).

But once a programme ends, integrating practice and fulfilling all those plans, those good intentions, often becomes a struggle whether through our own action or inaction, or through responses from others (Bayliss et al., 2007). For example one participant (Barbara) in this research study reported that her husband and her 20+ year old son would both ask “Have you had a nice sleep then” each time she meditated, this embarrassed her, so this part of her practice didn’t last very long. Everyday life, changes in personal circumstances, systemic barriers and stubborn habits dilute the desire for a different future and soon lead to a return to how participants were living (Centre for Reviews and Dissemination, 2015).

4.3 What could go wrong?

In a landmark study (Gorovitz and MacIntyre, 1976) identified a number of reasons for the possible failure of a programme, not as a whole, but in regard to its impact on the individual participant and their own failure to adopt the learning from it in a sustainable way. These reasons can be applied today to areas such as mindfulness courses which aim to establish a capacity for the self-management of a condition (Table 10).

Table 10 Reasons for programme failure (based on Gorovitz and MacIntyre 1976 with descriptions by the author)	
Reason	Description
Ignorance	Participants may have a limited understanding of the methods and processes involved, the conditions that apply and their ability to address them.
Ineptitude	Because of the conditions we are all affected by, overt and occult (not necessarily accompanied by obvious signs or symptoms) we may not apply what we have been taught effectively or appropriately
Necessary fallibility	<p>Each person's circumstances are different, we are each unique. While there will be certain commonalities in our lives, our individual backgrounds, ages, experiences all mean that we are asking too much of a programme if we expect it to be a 'one size fits all' solution. No matter what knowledge we bring, what research we undertake, we can never cover every combination of circumstances.</p> <p>Hence the programme delivered in this study asks individuals to make their own adaptations to encourage their confidence in bringing mindfulness practice into their daily lives.</p>

We know that modern life places different demands on us physically and psychologically, with connections to nature becoming forgotten. One study suggests that modern U.S. citizens spend 90% of their time indoors (Bratman et al., 2012). Given the impact of nature experience and the increasing interest in mindfulness practice we could ask why people are unable to make either a priority in their lives (Schultz, 2002; Roth & Robbins, 2004; Levesque & Brown, 2007; Mayer et al., 2009; Tremblay et al., 2015).

While for some it is the hope that there will be an easy option, a new drug or cure that will solve all their problems, experience suggests that for others it can be a lack of drive, or motivation to make changes, even ones that will restore enjoyment experienced as a child or good health experienced as a young adult. Some of these aspects are also addressed in Taniguchi's work (2004) where the chemistry concept of fractional sublimation is used to describe the process by which a person may change in stages as they reveal more of their real self, overcoming weakness. We can also reflect on the Buddhist tradition's response to the difficulties facing those practicing mindfulness, commonly known as the five hindrances (table 11).

Table 11 - the five hindrances
(table based on Sangharakshita 2004, with interpretation by the author)

Hindrance	Interpretation
Sensual desire or greed	While having a goal of good health is useful, constantly bringing it to mind isn't, it can be a hindrance. Likewise when the desire is for a return to a previous healthy state or to be free from using medication, even a desire for a miracle cure. This hindrance can also be seen in a desire to replicate previous experiences, including those in nature e.g. "I wish it was a great sunset like last time I visited"
Ill will or aversion	Aversion is wanting things not to be the way they are. Often seen as a 'why me' response or 'is this what my life is reduced to'? Ill will takes this a step further to be resentment against the health provision available or the 'system'.
Sloth and torpor	Sloth refers to heaviness or lack of energy in the body, while torpor means a 'dullness' of the mind. Seeking to develop the mind sometimes people desire a 'stillness' while this may seem pleasant, it can produce a dreamy state where one drifts off from watching the continual stream of thoughts, losing oneself in them. This dream state certainly isn't mindful but in catching yourself in it or being attracted to it is.
Restlessness and anxiety (or worry)	Restless can be a feeling brought on by committing to taking a programme, we want it to work, we are over-excited, agitated if it seems to take time to achieve a tangible result. When we feel restless we consume energy trying to push the feelings away. Anxiety or worry are fears (which may be non-specific) for the future. Am I wasting my time doing this programme? What will happen if it doesn't help?
Doubt	Whether a programme will work or if the effort needed is justified. Do we know the evidence of success, or perhaps others that have found mindfulness helpful.

Establishing and following a mindful practice also requires discipline and willpower. This can be a significant obstacle, especially when faced with trying to fit in with a family or work situation. The pursuit of nature connectedness may also not be a norm among everyday social circles. So these can be seen to give rise to hindrances such as doubt and anxiety. However, these are not the only hurdles for people wishing to make nature experience and connectedness habitual in their lives but instead find themselves repeatedly ‘falling short’. To overcome such hurdles the traditional approach is to get closer to the hindrance, to explore it in detail, really understanding its derivation, to be aware of responses, being close to the hindrance and responses but not resting in them. Getting closer may seem counter intuitive but it is better than not noticing the effect the hindrance has (Sangarakshita, 2004; Burch, 2008; Martini, 2015). Perhaps one of the biggest hindrances is through daily life itself, with all the complexity and chaos modern life with its demands can bring.

4.4 Chaos, Complexity And Daily Life

While some may speak about the mundanity or ordinariness of daily life (Grummel 2010) others recognise that for those living with chronic conditions life is anything but mundane or ordinary what Kabat-Zinn (1990) described as ‘life, the full catastrophe’. In fact life can be seemingly chaotic and this influences the way people act in general, and in managing their conditions. This action (or inaction) is questioned in studies on the way we critique daily life (McKinnon, 2016) which suggest we should look at daily life in terms of what can be changed. Something which is an element of the NBM approach on which this thesis is based.

A longitudinal study into medication adherence (Zullig et al., 2013) suggests that this chaos can be influenced by a variety of factors, negative influences e.g. lower level of education, number of children, the complication of medication doses, even financial status. There are also differences between genders and positive influences such as marital status and improved health literacy.

4.5 Moving into the research study

This and earlier chapters have set the scene for the research study, highlighting issues in health, from ageing populations and increases in lifestyle diseases, through to planning and resource sustainability, before moving on to show how the development of mindfulness based approaches and increasing connectedness to nature can help address some of these health issues.

In the next chapters we move from knowledge and discussion of these issues through my personal experience in managing a chronic condition and on to the design, implementation and findings of the research study.

**Salutogenesis in Action: a nature based 'mindfulness
for health and wellbeing' programme and its impact
on daily life**

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Lancaster University

2018

Volume 2

**The methodological approach and the
research itself including discussion and
outcomes**

The Journey: Finding a path, experiences and destination

Chapter 5 - Methodology, finding a path

*If you want to know the taste of a pear,
you must change the pear by eating it yourself.
If you want to know the theory and methods of revolution,
you must take part in revolution.
All genuine knowledge originates in direct experience.*

Mao Zedong⁵

5.1 Chapter Overview

While qualitative methodologies from grounded theory (Corbin & Stauss, 1990), phenomenology (Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Husserl, 1999, Smith et al., 2009) and discourse analysis (Wodak & Meyer, 2009; Fairclough, 2013)) through to rhizoanalysis (Angell, 2014) seek to adopt a scientific approach, gathering evidence and making arguments, there are many factors that influence the design of a study using such methods (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003) and approaches differ in their fundamental starting points (Morrow, 2005; Marshall & Rossman, 2014). Such factors include views on the nature of the phenomena we are studying (ontology), as well as views on the most appropriate ways of understanding the phenomena and the knowledge we have about it (epistemology) (Fleetwood, 2005). Whatever the approach used, we should understand the interaction between society and our cognition, that our thoughts and processes are interconnected with and structured by a range of societal influences (Gallotti & Frith, 2013). This is especially important to recognise when the research sets out to examine the daily lives of participants, including their quality of life (Lounsbury et al., 2014).

⁵ "On Practice" (July 1937), Selected Works, Vol. I, pp. 299-300

5.2 Making choices

In exploring the role of nature-based mindfulness in daily life it may seem there are two distinct elements to the research, firstly the effectiveness of mindfulness and secondly the impact of a connection to nature (Capaldi et al., 2015; Tang et al., 2015). The view taken here is that when the first is practiced effectively it is so intertwined with the connection to nature that it becomes difficult to separate them. This in contrast to other mindfulness practices where the focus may be on different areas such as memory capacity, attentiveness, or behaviour (Jha et al., 2010). In particular the research seeks to show how through greater awareness of 'being in the world' (Husserl's 'dasein' (Lavery, 2003)) and experience of the individual 'lifeworld' (Eatough & Smith, 2006; Smith et al., 2009), nature-based mindfulness approaches are seen to influence the way an individual makes sense of their experience and contributes to the development of a self-management process for improved health and wellbeing, and that these result in sustainable and beneficial change in daily lives (Davidson 2010). Also, in understanding how the approach may be seen to help participants in other areas of their lives such as family and wider relationships and embodied experience and emotional wellbeing, reflecting the work of Rogers (1942); Goffman (1963); and Klien (1988). In recognising these areas, there are a number of qualitative methodologies (table 12) that may be useful in identifying, illustrating and understanding the lived experience of individuals and their interaction with families and the wider community.

Table 12: Comparison of methodologies

Characteristics	Phenomenology	Grounded Theory	Narrative analysis	Case study	Ethnography
Focuses on	Understanding the actual experience	The theory of an experience	Exploration of an individual's story	In depth description of the experience	Describing experience shared by group
Suited for	Describing the 'lived' experience of an individual or group	Developing a theory of the experiences expressed by participants	Sharing of an individual's experience	Developing an in depth understanding of an experience	Identifying the shared patterns and experiences of a group
Involving	Studying several individuals sharing an experience	Studying actions of a number of individuals, not necessarily a group	One or more participants	Studying the specific experience of one or more people	Studying a group with a common background e.g. Culture, health
Information collected by	Mainly interviews but can include range of other media e.g. images	Interviews with a larger number of individuals	Interview and documents	Primarily interview but also using multiple sources included by participants e.g. objects	Observation and interview involving field research
Analytical strategy	Capturing specific statements, meanings, contexts, that portray the essence of 'lived' experience	Identifying and coding data	Analysing data, developing themes, possibly 'restoring' within an identified framework	Identifying and analysing themes raised in the study	Identifying and analysing themes specific to the group
General structure and processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify problem and questions Process of initial assumptions, data collection, analysis of issues and experiences raised and / or identified Significant statements Discussion of themes Conclusion and description of phenomenon 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify problem and questions Data collection, extensive coding and analysis Theoretical positioning and modelling Discussion of theory and positioning within existing work Conclusions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify problem and questions Significance of the individual and their story Production of the narrative and discussion of any individual emphasis on areas Themes identified Discussion of themes and patterns conclusion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify problem and questions Description of the case and its context Identifying and developing understanding of issues Detail of issues Closing discussion and conclusions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify problem and questions Description of the group and its background (what makes it a group) Identification and analysis of group themes Interpretation and discussion of issues raised Conclusion

Comparison of qualitative methodologies adapted from Cresswell (2013)

There are undoubtedly benefits to each of these methods ranging from theory construction, to understanding how things were being said and the personal stories that influenced each individual (Smith & Osborne, 2008). In exploring the impact of mindfulness and especially the nature-based mindfulness approach used, and in

 **PERSONAL REFLECTION**

While wanting to give voice to study participants I am anxious that my research is seen to have the necessary academic rigour yet also feel that in talking to others discussions seem to focus more on the process rather than the outcome. My views are based around remaining true to participant's interpretations of their daily experience alongside the social constructivist views relating to the reality constructed over time and interpretations of it. I want readers of my research to be confident in my assertions and conclusions, at the same time recognising that my own beliefs, assumptions, and interpretations of the data collected adds a dynamic interpretative element to the process, which I believe enhances its quality and richness

I would argue that I am not an interpreter trying to fit participant's perceptions of life, their constructed reality, into a specific theory. Rather that I am interpreting their perceptions of using nature based mindfulness and its impact on their lives in a way that others, without knowledge of individuals or their practices can understand and engage with.

I found I was particularly attracted to the idea of Bricoleur not literally as a 'handyman' who could fix things or a 'jack of all trades' but as a skilled practitioner who could weave elements of research together to produce an accurate interpretation.

particular to ensure an accurate portrayal of issues in the daily lives of participants and the ability to provide them with a voice, it seemed Phenomenology could provide a focus on how individuals live and the recognition that their perspectives on the world cannot be viewed in isolation (Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Husserl, 1999; Welton, 1999). Taking this further, interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) with its hermeneutic, idiographic and phenomenological underpinnings (Dreyfus, 1991; Smith & Osborne, 2008) helps explore from an insider's perspective, how each individual makes sense of their own condition, their application of mindfulness, their experience of nature and the meanings / descriptions they give to it (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). (Willig, 2001; Eatough & Smith, 2006).

However everyone's daily life contains differences, in influence, actions and outcomes and as already seen (Chapter 3) our lives, especially if affected by chronic illness, are full of complexity, uncertainty, risk and even perhaps chaotic. To reflect this requires a methodology consistent with epistemological and ontological stances that while explicit throughout the research process are also flexible and open to change based on the information gathered and reflection on it (Mason, 2002).

With further exploration it became apparent, especially examining psychology related research, that many were turning away from single methodologies and embracing pluralistic methods of research (Frost & Nolas, 2011). There are many ways of engaging in a pluralistic approach, from using multiple methods of data collection, seeking wider sources, adopting different theoretical perspectives or even simply

different researchers. Pluralism allows you to ask different questions about different things (Willig, 2013) in different ways. Such an approach allows the researcher to adapt methods to suit the research purpose (Chamberlain et al., 2011) and avoids making choices of methodology based on uncritical adoption because it is what is expected, preferred or even most popular (Chamberlain, 2000; 2011).

5.3 The Bricolage

So in seeking to use a method that allows the complexity of living with a chronic illness not only to be understood but to be adequately framed alongside the role and use of the nature based mindfulness approach I will be adopting a research 'Bricolage'. This recognises an ontological position that there cannot be a single or right way of looking at daily life, nor a single method of presenting such a life, that we cannot see daily life, especially that of different individuals as fixed objects (Kincheloe & Berry, 2004; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Rather it seeks to identify and understand how the research participants employ nature based mindfulness approaches in their daily lives; how they construct their life and give meaning to the complexity and chaos around them, coping with what some see as the mundanity of daily life but which for them may be hurdles to overcome. Some have suggested that qualitative research and the Bricolage approach in particular is like "reconstructing a broken mirror" (Anafara & Mertz, 2006), I prefer to see it as completing a jigsaw, bringing all aspects together, illness, practices, lives, families, perceptions, hopes and disappointments. A jigsaw that will be clear and understood once completed.

In adopting such a bricolage approach part of the decision making process was the sense of adaptability, the use of differing methods with different participants, rather than a study of a small homogenous group (Du-Babcock, 2003). Although there are some benefits to such a group it was felt that the way groups can adopt similar views especially when reporting in (Hinsz, Tindale, & Vollrath, 1997; Pennebaker, 2011) could create difficulties in trying to gain an accurate picture of their practice and daily lives (Holtgraves & Kashima, 2008; Van Swol & Carlson., 2017). There are many differences within the group, from age, gender, employment status, to the type and complexity of their physical or psychological conditions as well as the fact that in delivering the nature based mindfulness approach, this primary intervention was focused individually (Good & Marshall, 1997; Burlingame, Strauss & Joyce., 2013; Tiberius, 2013), with only some activities taking place as a group e.g. mindful movement class or quarterly follow-up practice sessions.

When selecting any qualitative methodology, a key to its usefulness is the issue of reliability. In research which attempts to explore the lived experience of participants it is unlikely that circumstances can be repeated, re-created or even remembered by the participants in the same detail. However, rigour is crucial and within my study this is achieved by constantly reflecting on the importance of reliability, in particular the key areas identified in the work of Lincoln and Guba (1985) (table 13).

Table 13 – Four criteria for achieving rigour in qualitative research (based on Lincoln & Guba (1985) with interpretation by author)	
Credibility	Activities chosen were able to be replicated in some manner by every participant. Their responses were recorded. They made their own choice of response mechanism and I was able to return to them to confirm that my interpretation represented their views accurately
Dependability	Relating to the issues raised above, this included checking that my interpretation was not only accurate but was appropriate to their meaning
Confirmability	All interviews and journals have been transcribed where possible (images and other artifacts used have been copied and/or scanned) in order to provide an ‘audit’ trail that can be viewed and interpreted by others to confirm the validity of interpretation
Transferability	Through documenting the delivery of the programme and the transcription of materials detailed above, it should be possible for others to transfer the activities to a different group and see similar results

Chapter 6 - Constructing the Bricolage: the pieces come together

6.1 Introduction

This section describes the methods chosen to from participant selection to collection and analysis of data. It describes how the choice of methods meets the need to adequately portray the life issues of study participants and that the choice reflects the need to demonstrate whether or not a Nature Based Mindfulness Approach (NBMA) can aid the successful integration of the practices into the daily lives of the participants. It also demonstrates an understanding of the philosophical background and theoretical underpinning of the approach.

In constructing the Bricolage initial thoughts were to the availability, appropriateness and application of assessment tools. It was decided that these should be evaluated prior to use with the study groups and so a pilot study was carried out.

6.2 Pilot Study

The pilot study explored the usefulness of validated tools as measures of the efficacy of mindfulness practice in the daily life of participants. One element of daily life often observed is Quality of Life (QoL). In the social sciences this is often seen in material terms, having the home one aspires to, the resources to lead a certain lifestyle (Diener & Suh, 1997; Veenhoven, 2012 & 2013), while in health fields QoL is more likely to measure physical and mental abilities to live as desired or in the face of certain conditions (Sempik et al., 2010; Lounsbury et al., 2014). For this reason the Short Form 36 (SF36) is used in many studies included in the Literature Review (Chapters 2 & 3) as it focuses on these health related issues (Doran, 2009; ten Klooster, 2014). Even when used as part of a longitudinal study the SF36 does not give an adequate picture of an individual's daily life, nor does it provide sufficient detail to allow an understanding of the impact of isolated factors in an individual's daily experience. (7.2.3). In deciding whether to use other validated questionnaires as part of the Bricolage it was felt that the following assessment tools may provide a comprehensive examination of the effects of mindfulness, nature and sensory awareness in daily life:

- The Five Facets of Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ) (Baer, 2011)
- The Sense Awareness Inventory (SAI) (Burns, 1998)
- The Connectedness to Nature Scale (CNS) (Mayer & Frantz, 2004; appendix G.

1.1)

The pilot study showed that there can be a number of difficulties with such methods including:

- The relevance of the response measured to the participant's daily life, so what if a participant feels a sense of oneness to the world around them? Grading this strongly (CNS - Mayer & Frantz 2004) does not demonstrate the impact on daily life.
- The degree of fragmentation of the mindfulness practice, one participant referred to using techniques as a first aid kit rather than building them into his daily life.
- The perception of participants, who may initially over rate their responses as they have less understanding of issues prior to the programme and so post-programme completion results reflect informed rather than uninformed perception e.g. a participant may indicate a high mindfulness of sensations at the start of a programme and give the same score at the end because they now understand what it really means to be mindful.

The key to understanding the sustainable benefits of a mindfulness programme is the ability to see how the skills and techniques taught are applied, how they enable an individual to deal with the illness, and interact with and feel valued by others in their community. For a nature based programme specifically this also means identifying how the techniques are more readily adopted than those from a more traditional programme.

More importantly for this study there are concerns that much research using such tools is seen to be reductionist, resulting in a disjointed approach to mindfulness that

fails to adequately portray or capture its full potential impact on a person's life (Shapiro, 2013; Williams, 2013).

As a result of the pilot study a number of points became apparent, these were:

1. that data collection methods chosen should be appropriate to the wishes and lives of participants.
2. there must be flexibility / choice of methods for participants, including the freedom to use multiple methods as needed.

Points 1 & 2 relate to problems some participants in the pilot study had in using questionnaires such as the CNS and SF36.

3. that there must be the ability to review the data during the study and change when necessary to ensure it captures the lived experience of participants, this flexibility felt to be a key aspect of Bricolage research methods (Wibberley 2012).

Point 3 arose from the need to allow participants to have freedom of expression but also needing to be able to adequately record experiences.

4. that others (e.g. supervisors, examiners, other researchers) be able to review the data i.e. if the participant chose to produce a piece of artwork to reflect their experience it must be capable of being transported or its essence captured digitally.

5. That the intended smaller group study would allow greater focus on a participant's daily life.

Points 4 & 5 concern the amount and richness of data available and the desire to go beyond data collection to gain an understanding of participants' lives. Awareness of these points and the knowledge gained from the pilot study informed the choice of methods and along with deeper awareness of issues raised in the methodology chapter contributed to the overall Bricolage design of the main study.

The only assessment tool retained for the study, due to its simplicity, ease of use and its ability to provide a guide to sessional activity was the Sense Awareness Inventory.

6.2.1 Sense Awareness Inventory

The sense awareness inventory (Burns, 1998) enables an individual to reflect on their experience (table 14). It allows them to highlight aspects of awareness, a particular sense, that could be worked with in more detail and it allows questions such as

'If these are things that make you feel good how often do you do experience them?' and 'what stops you'? (Anderson, 2010).

These questions are especially relevant when the pilot study sense awareness results (table 14) show that most are free.

Table 14 - Sample sense awareness inventory responses

Table adapted by the author from Burns (1998) with table contents based on a compilation of answers from study participants.

Sight	Sound	Taste	Touch	Smell
Sunshine	Waves crashing	Ice cream	Polished wood	Airports
Xmas trees	Laughing	Fruit cake	Pile of leaves	Seaside
Waves	Drums	Bacon sandwich	Hugs	Wild garlic
Smiles	Rushing river	Fresh stream water	Rock	Frying
Open fire	Seagulls	Cheese	Fur	Fresh mown grass
Falling leaves	Birds singing	Dumplings	Icy cold	Salt & vinegar
Hawks	Wind	Oranges	Wind	Wood burning
Dog wagging tail	Crackling fire	Fresh air on cold morning	Warm fleece	Pine forest
Snowing	Hawk screeching	Coriander	Girl friend	Juniper
Breath freezing	Brass bands	Sherbert	Hot deep bath	Lavender

6.2.2 The Compass Rose

As a result of questions asked pre and post pilot study, a further assessment tool was developed to aid interaction between myself and participants before, during and in after the formal programme delivery. This tool is not covered in detail in this thesis as its use is not validated by others. Rather it simply formed another part of the Bricolage, a means to an end in helping participants to articulate progress. It may be that future research focuses on this as a useful tool for teachers and practitioners. The NBMA is very much about a journey, a way of living that deepens ability to live well. To illustrate progress on this journey the Compass Rose allows us to track progression in the different areas of practice. One advantage of the tool is that the cardinal points can be redefined as the whole tool is designed to suit the needs of the individual. The cardinal points of the compass are shown (Fig.11) and the whole tool is attached in Appendix F.

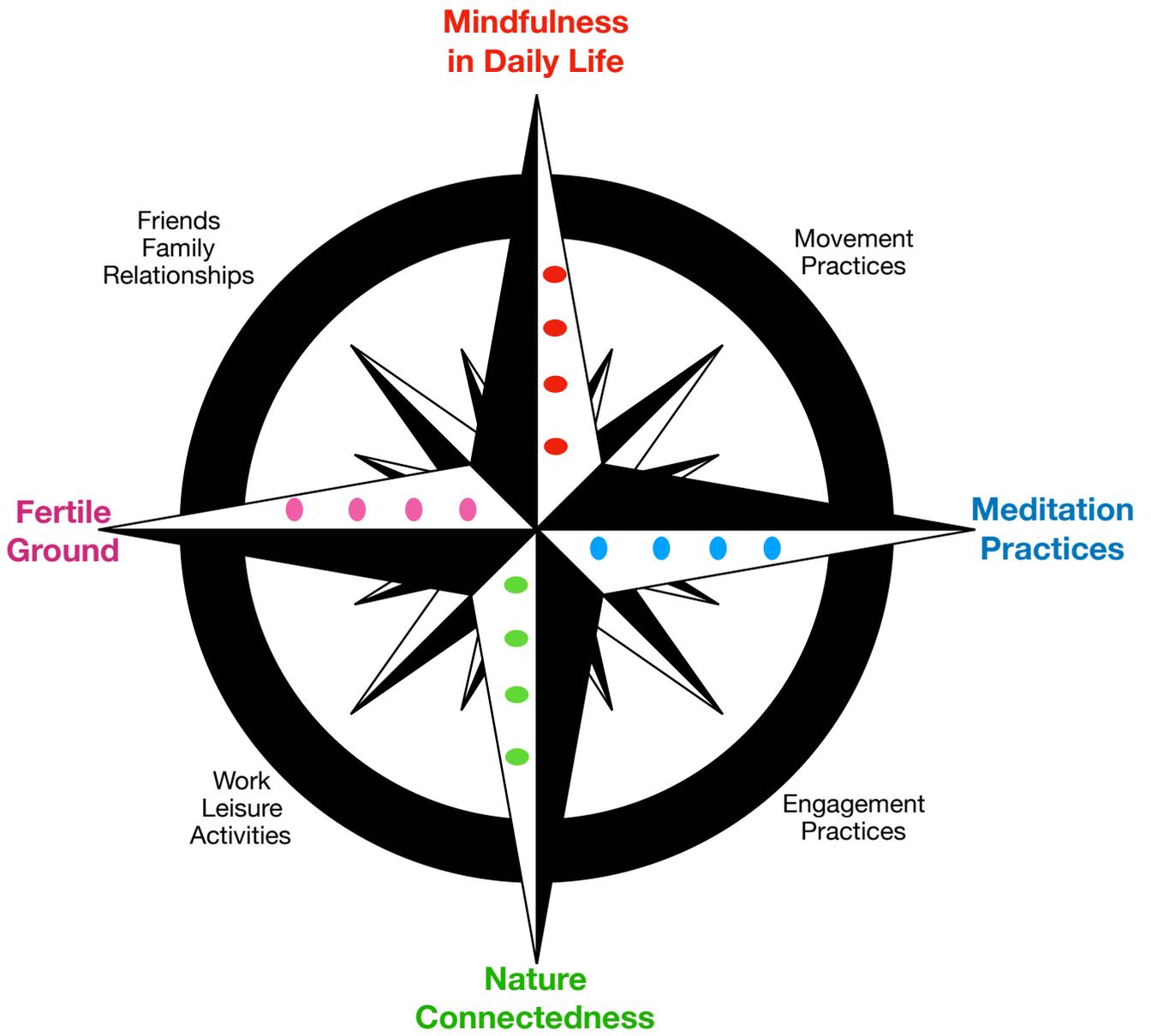


Fig. 11 The Compass Rose
 A framework for nature based mindfulness practices

6.3 The Bricolage: pieces are assembled

The aim of the research is to identify the importance of a NBMA for individual health and wellbeing. Specifically, to add to the existing knowledge base by showing whether the application of a nature focus to mindfulness practice in daily life improves personal resilience therefore contributing to the success of the self-management approach. In order to achieve this the decision that Plowright's (2011) Framework for Integrative Methods (FraIM) would provide a flexible and responsive structure drawing the different methods which contribute to the Bricolage together in order to address the research question and its ancillary objectives.

Although the framework (fig.19) may suggest that the process is a linear one, in real terms and in keeping with the Bricolage approach it was adapted and a feedback loop allowed each stage to be revisited as the research progressed. As will be seen, this is important, as in revisiting stages the research developed from a single dimensional phenomenological study to a multi-faceted study incorporating elements of collaborative or cooperative enquiry, reflection and development by myself and participants. In this way my research itself echoes the work of Whitehead and McNiff (2009) by discussing how research becomes a living practice where the researcher (bricoleur) / researchee relationship becomes an educative one in which participants can develop and adopt life changing strategies. This is important especially given the likelihood of increased demand for self-management programmes where participants can take on responsibility for the design of their care and programmes used and is discussed in more detail later. So the research takes on the mantle of 'action research' which reflecting the view of Whitehead (2009) is also affected by my own position of

holding values that are developed and realised in my practice in all its aspects, personal, as teacher, and as researcher. In its simplest form the framework appears below (Fig. 20).

However as discussed above at each stage the framework was capable of being expanded to provide a template for the research activity (figure 21). Using the framework as a guide for the chapter, I will now look at the recruitment of participants ('cases' in figure 20), how they were chosen and the criteria used to do so.

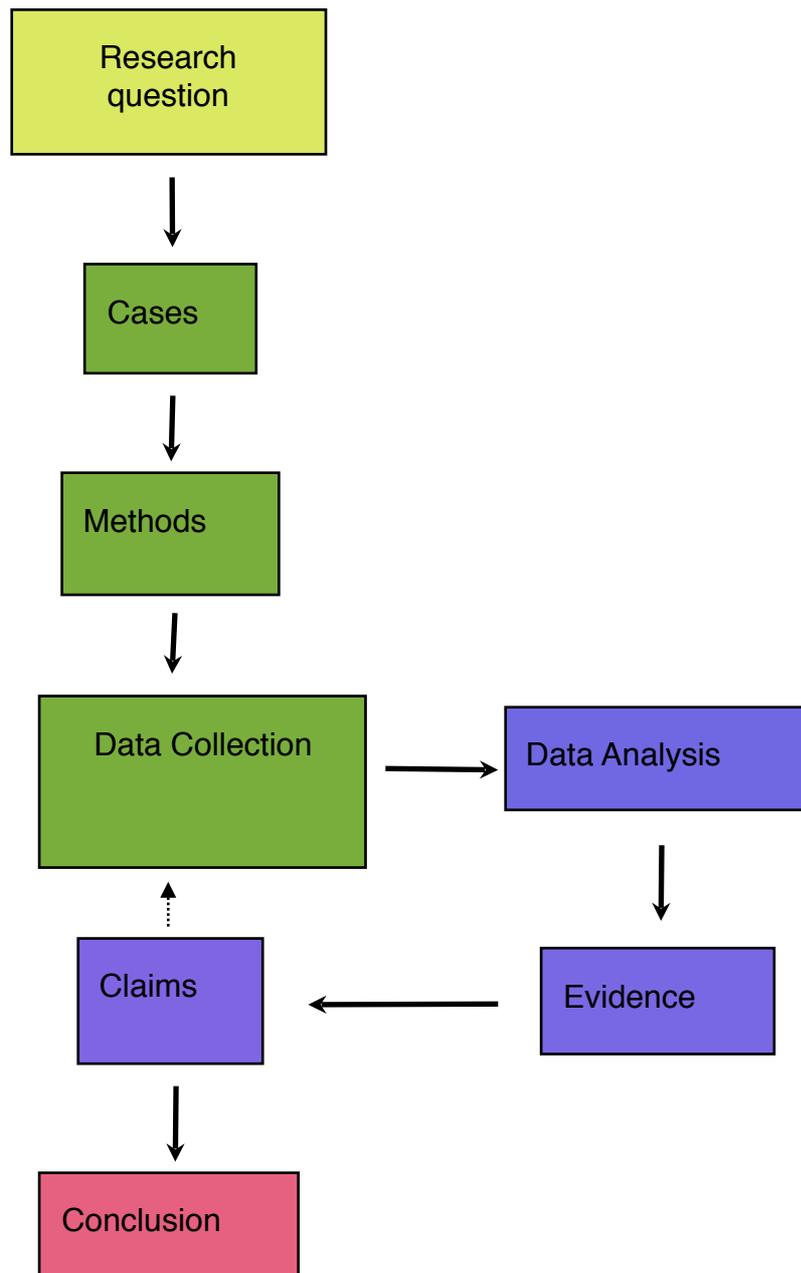


Figure 20: Framework for integrated methods (FraIM)
 (adapted from Plowright, 2011)

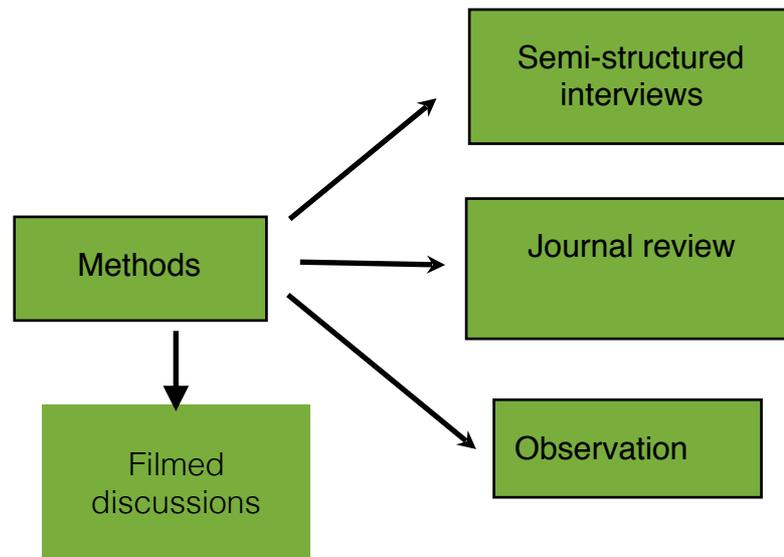


Figure 21 - example expansion of the FraIM mode
(adapted from Plowright, 2011)

6.4 Approaches to selection

The first approach chosen is of convenience sampling, where the participants were known to me following other programmes and/or inclusion in the pilot study. There is a danger that convenience sampling approaches are thought to lack the rigour and hence the validity of other approaches (Landers & Behrend, 2015). For this reason the approach of purposive sampling was also used (Watters & Biernacki, 1989; Marshall, 1996, Farrokhi & Mahmoudi-Hamidabad, 2012).

The purposive approach used, firstly includes the element of criterion based sampling (Morrow, 2005) in which a number of criteria were chosen to reflect the aims of the study including the hypotheses which the research seeks to test. The criteria and the reason for them are shown below (table 15).

Table 15. Criteria used for first stage of participant selection	
Criteria	Reasons
• All participants to be known by myself or referred by other participant	To remove initial inter-personal barriers and ease the transition into in-depth interviews
• All participants over 18 years old	For the ability to provide informed consent to participate in the research and to undertake the range of activities forming the programme
• All participants are under the state retirement age	This criteria relates to reasons of engagement with the programme e.g. desire to work
• All participants have currently active experience of a chronic health condition	The mindfulness programme is specifically focused on those with such conditions rather than programmes such as MBCT for Depression
• All participants have previous experience of mindfulness based approaches	In order to isolate the role of a nature based focus to the training programme it was felt beneficial to have some previous knowledge of mindfulness practice

Using the above criteria eight participants from the pilot programme and two participants referred by others were interviewed informally at which point the next ‘stage’ of purposeful sampling was then introduced. This stage, through the initial interview, sought to identify motivating factors for taking part in the research (see table 17 below) and the desired outcome participants hoped for themselves (Miller & Rollnick, 2002; Burke et al., 2003; Arkowitz et al., 2015). The next element of purposive sampling meant that participants having initially volunteered and identified their own reasons for taking part, were then invited to join the study to comprise a group with a variety of conditions / needs i.e. they did not all have the same condition. This reflects the views of Lee-Jen Wu et al (2014) that researchers:

Carefully select subjects based on study purpose with the expectation that each participant will provide unique and rich information of value to the study

Lee-Jen Wu, S. et al., (2014)

While Patton (2002) stated that:

The logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information rich cases for study in depth

This second criteria was necessary as it is important for this study that it is not limited in viewing the approach as applicable to a narrow group of conditions, rather it seeks to identify the overall impact of a nature based mindfulness approach and its application to a broad range of conditions and participants.

It is anticipated that more focused studies, for example of the application of nature based mindfulness programme for those of limited mobility, could be the subject of future research. By being clear about the criteria and desire for variance in participants the process can be seen as objective and transparent and so capable of standing up to independent scrutiny.

So this sampling process has in particular helped to refine the emerging categories and themes of the data as they developed while avoiding the limitations of purely convenience sampling (Landers & Behrend, 2015). Table 16 shows the characteristics

of the seven selected participants (the table includes myself as an active member of the study), meeting objective 1.3.2.

While this combination of sampling approaches may seem to be an opportunistic method of defining the study group as it takes advantage of existing knowledge about the participants, it avoids the less robust methods associated with convenience sampling such as recruitment based on location, responsiveness and ease of access (Farrokhi & Mahmoudi-Hamidabad, 2012).

Table 16: Participant Characteristics				
participant	age	health condition	experience	prime motivation
A Maggie	62	Heart and Lung conditions	participated in yoga and tai chi with elements of mindful movement and meditation	desire to spend more time with great grandson
B Greta	59	Arthritis and Stress	A number of Buddhist meditation and mindfulness courses	To be able to cope with pain levels and engage more fully with activities
C Meg	55	Fibromyalgia	Yoga, meditation, mindfulness courses	To engage more with activities
D Barbara	50	Colon problems	Mindfulness Course via NHS Pain Management Unit	To cope more effectively with fluctuating pain
E April	56	Anxiety	Workbook based 8 week mindfulness course	To be able to resume active lifestyle
F David	59	IBS and CFS/ME	many years (30+) meditation practice and Buddhist	To feel more able to cope with day to day activity
G Crash	27	Anxiety	University based 8 week course	complete degree and engage in new opportunities
H myself	59	Diabetes, Depression and Neuropathy	meditation and mindfulness courses	active lifestyle

Having selected participants, all were provided with written information about the research study and their role in it (Appendix H.2). The information included details of how to contact myself as researcher and my supervisory team. It also informed participants that they could leave the programme at anytime without needing to provide reason and that in the event of their choosing to do so all data would be destroyed. After describing the data security and storage arrangements all were asked to give informed consent (Appendix H.1).

6.4.1 Selection Summary

- A. The participants chosen were known to me or others through the pilot study.
- B. Initial selection was through
- informal interview with participant in which the programme and outcomes of the study and the participant's expectations were discussed.
 - identification of participant's personal motivation for taking part in study.
 - discussion of the nature of participant's active condition (Most people with chronic conditions face a range of other illnesses (chapter 2)).
- C. A final group of seven participants were identified (eight including myself as participant). In selecting participants, recognition was given that participants could withdraw at any time and that there would be freedom to choose methods of reporting e.g. journals and interviews (see section 7.9).
- D. The initial intention was that all participants would take a full part in the research study. One participant did drop out due to work commitments and moving away, she was replaced by Participant ID Meg.
- E. The age span of participants is relatively small. While in part this is as a result of a change in participants (change from age 25 to age 55) it also reflects the nature of the programme with delivery during the day so participants needed to be either working flexibly or not working. It may be of use in the future to expand the age group and also to examine more flexible delivery options.

6.5 Meeting Participants

The initial meeting with participants took place at a venue of their choice, normally a local coffee shop. This was to ensure the safety of the participant and myself as for some participants we were meeting for the first time. By allowing the participant to choose the venue it also removed any sense of intimidation e.g. meeting at the University. Following this initial meeting, training sessions and interviews took place at mutually agreed venues that had the facilities needed such as privacy, toilets and refreshments (table 17).

Table 17: Main venues used	
Venue	Reason
UoC Lancaster Campus	Convenient for one participant and myself as researcher. Also some open areas for nature related activity
Captain French Surgery Kendal (Help the Aged facilities)	Convenient for one participant and myself as researcher.
Ford Park Ulverston	Convenient for three participants and myself as researcher. Venue used for consolidation (full day) training with all participants. Good access to open areas, gardens and woodland for nature focused activity
RSPB reserve Leighton Moss	Central location. Used with 5 participants. Site ideal for certain nature focused activity
National Trust Sizergh Castle	Central location used with all participants, Good access to gardens, woodland and walks for nature focused activity
Conishead Priory	Convenient for three participants and myself as researcher. Good access to gardens and woodland for nature focused activity

In addition to these venues, informal meetings and some activities took place elsewhere. For example some sessions took place in the context of a walk while others were simple a short ‘catch up’ to establish progress in personal practice.

In addition to meeting once a week for the eight weeks of the training programme there were at least four (dependent on participant need e.g. facing additional difficulties or lack of understanding) follow-up meetings / interviews / activities which sought to identify how participants were continuing to develop their personal practice and understand the impact if any it was having on the daily lives. This also enabled me to seek to understand the way the participants' views were changing over time, something likely to occur as either their life circumstances impacted on their practice or their practice became deeper and more informed resulting in greater impact on their experience (Chapman & Smith 2002).

Interviews were recorded in a variety of ways appropriate to the circumstances. These include audio recording, video recording and notes taken by myself immediately afterwards e.g. following a walk. Where note taking was used these were checked with participants to ensure they represented an accurate record of the discussion or topic.

In summary the following activities took place

- 140 hours of training
- 64 hours of follow up meetings
- 12 hours of group meetings (2 x informal practice days of 6 hours)
- 6 individual journals covering the study period
- 5 video interviews
- 4 audio interviews

6.6 Method of delivery

Although all participants recruited had identified previous experience of mindfulness practice it became apparent that the word ‘experience’ covered a wide range of knowledge and ability. For this reason the decision was taken to use the mechanism of a sector recognised Mindfulness for Health programme as the delivery platform for the additional ‘nature based’ elements of the study. This standard programme is detailed in Appendix E. The additional elements that were included were added to the sessions each week as follows (table 18):

Table 18: Additional elements of nature based mindfulness programme		
Week	Activity	description
1	Identification of ‘sit space’ outdoors	a ‘sit spot’ is a place to visit everyday, for stillness, observation, quiet. A place to connect with nature. It becomes a daily retreat, a place of renewal, a place to get to know well.
2	5 key steps	Looking for bigger views, noticing small things, mindfulness of the mundane, using all 5 senses, communicating through words or images
3	Journaling	Use of journals and other media to explore experiences, thoughts and reflection
4	Mindful walking	identifying walking areas and pacing
5	Mindful activity outdoors	Introducing new activities that involve awareness of nature and the senses
6	Sound meditation	Learning the ability to respond rather than react against intrusive sounds
7	Personal metaphor	using natural metaphor to link to personal situation
8	Planning	Identifying key practice elements to continue in daily activity
9	Activity Day	some weeks after the programme (according to participant availability) a full day of activities in local nature reserve

The Sense Awareness Inventory (Burns 1998) was also used before, during and post programme as a means of identifying areas to focus on in future weeks. A further key difference to the traditional programme was a weekly one-to-one interview that encouraged reflection on activities and a focus on mindfulness in daily life, again this measure may influence the outcome of the programme and is discussed further in chapter ten. Although all participants received the same training, their method of feedback on personal activities was based on individual choice with three participants using more detailed journals (appendix A.1-5), three using introductory daily journals (appendix C.1-3), while four chose a more formal interview style of feedback (appendix b). Interestingly although all participants held at least a Certificate of Higher Education there were clear differences in ability to engage with and use certain feedback methods. This is discussed in more detail in chapter 9.

A major advantage of allowing participants a greater autonomy in the way they feedback information on their daily lives is the ability to analyse different data yet identify similar themes. This is the concept of triangulation, a process that increases the validity and credibility of results (Taniguchi, 2004). In this study there are two forms of triangulation used, the methodological triangulation described above, that of using different methods to gather the data and also data triangulation itself, the fact that the data is produced from more than one person, living in different circumstances and within different personal, family, work and health constraints. Again this increases the validity of any common themes identified, avoiding any bias resulting from a sole researcher, sole participant or sole methodology approach.

6.7 Degree of Structure

When data collection is discussed, the terms structured, semi-structured and unstructured are often used. This seems a false distinction in that it is difficult to see how any phenomenological study could be totally unstructured as if this was the case the study would not exist. In this study participants were allowed to report back freely. While meetings occurred they were led by the participant's reflection with follow up questions from me.

No method seeking to engage with, record and interpret daily life, the actual experience of a person can do so in a theoretical vacuum. The participants know more about their lives than any visitor can hope to experience. So any methodology used will be partial and through the very nature of the project, the serendipity of each individuals's life experience will include elements that cannot be anticipated (Banks 2001). This does not mean there is no structure, rather that I recognise, especially when thinking of how I describe, in words including metaphor, poetry and images, my own experience of a chronic condition, the degree of flexibility needed in documenting in whatever form, the expression of someone's daily experience and the interpretation of that by someone else.

The other issue here is to ensure that in recording their lived experience the participants can have a degree of spontaneity, as the following statement describes:

Spontaneity is a quality of interaction, which does not imply impulsiveness, thoughtlessness, lack of intention or lack of anticipation.... it is to do with the quality of the self-consciousness experienced.

(Shaw 2006)

Therefore it was essential during the research that participants chose their preferred method of documenting their involvement and were able to describe, write, paint, photograph, record in journals as they wished (Appendices B, C, D).

Every image, recording and artifact, exists in its own right and is also embedded in a range of interactions with others, all with their own narrative. It is also possible to view this as an ontological position reflecting Heidegger's seminal views on 'plural realism' (Dreyfus 1991), or the belief that it is possible to have many valid viewpoints simultaneously. Not only the participants' views will change on a daily basis but so will mine as an interpretive researcher identifying issues and reflecting on them but also as someone with a chronic illness that may affect my own changing perceptions. As a result the approach chosen deliberately involves a 'low' degree of structure. This brings a number of advantages (Table 19).

Table 19 : Advantages of low degree of structure	
application	advantages
Data	Level of predictability of outcome will be low
	Pre-structuring will be limited e.g. No in-depth questionnaires requiring high level of literacy
	Open ended questions and discussions between participants allow freedom of answers
Participant	Choice of response mechanism, which is not predetermined and may change
	High level of choice in mode of response
	Low level of control applied (could be seen as negative so awareness needed)
Researcher	Greater freedom in accepting wide range of responses and use of data e.g. production of video
	Low level of control needed (which can also be seen as a disadvantage)

This approach, in seeking to demonstrate how the nature based mindfulness practice helps participants in their daily lives, enables them to describe what this experience is like, describe the impact it has (e.g. lifting their mood) and identify what this means for them without their needing to understand or explain why. In this way it can be seen how mindfully connecting with nature may enhance what has been described as ‘the joint enterprise of man and the world’ (Merleau-Ponty, 1962).

In addition to the point of spontaneity, the use of journals, images and other media chosen by the participants ensures the approach is collaborative, meaning that the participants are instrumental in what is recorded rather than the researcher. While this may raise issues such as participants’ focus not matching that of myself as researcher (e.g. participant Barbara recording the detail of meals) this is vital as it can illustrate

points that may have been missed (e.g. Barbara's delight in food can be seen to illustrate 'islands of pleasure' in a daily existence of pain and depression) it also demonstrates the 'mindful' interconnection that results from participation in the programme. Understanding interconnectedness was discussed by me when obtaining ethical clearance for the study (Appendix G3).

6.8 Use of Journals

Journals were provided for all participants to use as they saw fit to record thoughts, feelings and emotions on a daily or less frequent basis (Ortlipp, 2008). Some guidance was provided as the study progressed, usually in confirmation of the right of the participant to include or record in a way they chose. e.g. the use of drawings, photographs or other pieces of artwork. Participants were also encouraged to use their journals for reflection prior to discussion (Knasel et al., 2000).

Given the nature of mindfulness practice, a core element of which is awareness, I felt that a journal was an appropriate tool for the study for as Waldo and Hermanns (2009) stated it *'enhances self-awareness and awareness of others, while personalising the learning experience'* (pp. 26-29) and especially during the teaching phase of the study that *'the process of keeping journals may contribute to positive learning outcomes'* (Ross et al., 2014, pp. 22-26)

While the journals allowed the participants to express themselves freely (Boud, 2001) they were also useful as a reflective tool both in reflecting on experiences, and looking back reflecting on changes in the style and detail of information recorded.

The journals provide me as researcher with a useful means of identifying the conceptual understanding of participants (Duban, 2014) often providing the basis for a future discussion. The journals were collected at our meetings and reviewed and where necessary transcribed before being returned. A second journal was used by participants during this period, which itself would be collected at the next meeting.

6.8.1 Journalling Issues

The use of journals is widely recognised as a therapeutic practice in its own right, journal therapy and journal based counselling just two of many options. Journals are also widely used in professional reflective practice. This presents an issue for this study where the journals are used mainly as a recording and reflective tool.

The key is intentionality. The journals were not mandatory, they were a participant choice. There was no reflection on the process of completing the journal, ‘how did it feel to write things down’ type questions, nor any reflection which involved looking back over time. Reflection was purely a matter of looking at what had been recorded during the current week or longer period, to aid discussion. There was no discussion of the potential benefits of journalling as a personal therapeutic tool. If comments were made by participants regarding what they noticed purely from the process then these were linked back to the actual mindfulness practice.

6.9 Other Issues

The methods chosen aim to bring to the fore a greater and deeper understanding of the life experiences of the participants (Krumwiede & Krumwiede 2012) including the key areas (adapted from van Manen, 1999) of:

- **Temporality** – While many people discussing stress describe it as involving a sense of never having enough time or always feeling rushed, others will discuss how being in the country gives them a feeling of life being ‘slower’. However in looking at ‘lived’ experience I also seek to understand how the participants’ experience (Eaves et al., 2015) of the ‘here and now’ is influenced by their past experience and their aspirations and /or fears for the future as well as their connectivity to others (Overboe, 1999). This was done at all stages from identifying motivating factors in the initial interview through to discussing their backgrounds and identifying common themes that seemed to influence them and their responses (Ellingsen et al., 2014) .
- **Spatiality** – Our experience of space, the way we relate to the space around us (Ganser 2006), the space in which our lives are made and constantly changing (Holloway & Valentine 2000). The same space can mean different things to different people. In the pilot study two interview participants described ‘big sky’ but for one this was seen from the seashore, the other a city. The amount of space we perceive can be repressive for some while providing a sense of freedom for others. In examining the participant’s experience it is important to

gain an understanding of their view of their home, work and leisure environments (Linke, 2014) or the ability to access other space e.g. public parks, that may be beneficial (Thompson et al., 2012). The nature based mindfulness programme sought to develop an individual's reflection on their connection with nature in its widest sense, their own views of what nature is and how it was included in their lives. The methods chosen allowed for this because participants were free to be as active or inactive as they chose e.g. activities as varied as a 15 minute 'sit spot mediation' and a beach clean and fell run!

- **Embodiment** – The body is at the heart of our experience, how we actually 'feel' our experience or lack of it, in particular situations or conditions (Heggdal, 2013). Someone may simply refer to feeling exhilarated or alive in a situation while an embodied experience may be expressed in more detail 'my nerves felt on edge, my heart beating faster, my mind feeling alert 'aware of every sense'(Anderson, 2010). Others may have a clear sense of how they respond physically to feeling vulnerable and low or confident and assured (Ojala et al., 2015). This element is also an important part of the articulation of the reflection and interpretation of experiences for both the participant's and myself as participant / researcher. Mindfulness is often regarded as a body-based practice as the body can provide an anchor for our responsiveness.
- **Intersubjectivity** - suggests we can recognise connections without involving a cognitive process, recognising things are without questioning why

(Rączaszek-Leonardi et al., 2013). Attempting to isolate individual physical and mental responses is a dualistic approach that follows a traditional scientific method (Cartesian dualism) (Bohleber, 2013) rather than recognising that the feelings, emotions and actions of an individual are a result of the interaction between the physical and mental (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). All things exist in relationship to something else. Examples could be how we recognise something is 'wrong' by seeing a friend's body language, without having to think about what might have happened nor do we need to be actually with others as it is claimed all experience is in some sense in relation to others (Zlatev, 2014) e.g. we may often feel "X wouldn't like me doing this". Even when we are not with others, experience can be in relation to them, e.g. the sense of loss felt when visiting a place for the first time following the loss of a partner. A key part of the nature based mindfulness approach is to develop a sense of connectivity that enables a different perspective on health, wellbeing, personal judgment and reactivity.

6.10 Discussion

The process of gathering data has been carefully designed and implemented. The aim was to have the required flexibility to ensure accurate representation of participants' lives and to identify and understand the impact the programme had on their conditions. In the same way that use of different data collection methods discussed aids the verifiability of the data, there are also a number of qualitative methodologies (table 16), that are useful in identifying, illustrating and understanding the lived

experience of individuals and their interaction with their families and the wider community.

While elements of these different methods have been used in interpreting the data and recognising as previously discussed that using integrated methods aids in the triangulation of the results, ensuring their appropriateness and validity, some methods were used more prominently than others.

Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) in particular provides an ideal methodology to examine personal experiences, as giving a voice to participants is important (Warne et al., 2013) in exploring the impact of mindfulness and especially the nature based mindfulness approach (Himmelstein et al., 2012). With its idiographic and phenomenological underpinnings, it is used to explore, from an insider's perspective, how each individual makes sense of their own condition, their application of mindfulness, their experience of nature and the meanings they give to it (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). Fundamentally it helps to reveal the connection between ourselves and the world around us, what Goethe called 'Delicate Empiricism', understanding the world by what we experience rather than what we infer (Wahl 2005). At the same time, my own beliefs, assumptions, and interpretations of the data collected add to this process a vital and ever changing dynamic, interpretative element (Smith, 1996).

6.11 The Delivered Programme

6.11.1 Initial Meeting

All participants met with me individually at the start of the programme. This meeting was used to identify how they met the established participant criteria (Table 16), including their current circumstances e.g. illness, work and family situation. It went on to determine their interest in participation and hoped for outcomes before describing the training that would be given and discuss the ways in which they may develop their personal practice. In this meeting methods such as journal keeping were also discussed, though at this time no precise directions were given as I felt it more appropriate that participants were able to choose such data collection methods based on informed consent i.e. that they had started the programme and understood more about the activities involved in building practices into their daily lives before adding to the commitment they had already made. The reason for this is my own experience of managing a chronic illness, where while I may want to do something initially, when my condition flares up my ability to cope and my attitude changes so that the activity becomes more of a burden, something that must be done rather than something that is adding to my fulfilment. At this first meeting participants completed the Sense Awareness Inventory (SAI) used during the pilot study. This was not used in a quantitative sense, rather it was used as a tool to raise awareness of the senses and also to identify potential areas for initial focus such as engaging with a particular sense e.g. touch which may appear underused.

6.11.2 The Tuition Stage

Initial participation consisted of eight, two and a half hour meetings, each held on a weekly basis at a time chosen by the participant to fit into their schedule. The meeting consisted of

- Review of their condition and the week leading up to the meeting
- Body scan meditation
- Discussion of practice in daily life
- Mindful movement
- Mediation practice e.g. mindfulness of breathing (MOB) or Kindly awareness (KA)
- Discussion of home practice for week ahead, especially the nature based elements (Table 18)

The meetings were all held in a ‘neutral’ location rather than a treatment centre or the participant’s home. The only requirement being that there must be privacy (a separate room for discussion with the space available to teach mindful movement and floor based meditation). I am grateful to the following organisations that allowed their private facilities to be used:

- Age UK - Captain Fisher Centre, Kendal
- Ford Park Community Group, Ulverston
- RSPB Leighton Moss, Silverdale
- University of Cumbria, Lancaster Campus

6.11.3 Follow up Stage

Following the eight week tuition stage participants were asked to attend a series of short meetings of up to two hours (according to their need to discuss issues), initially weekly as their practice became embedded into their daily lives, then monthly to review progress. At these meetings additional tuition was given when needed to encourage participants to adapt practice to their personal needs. During these meetings the use of journals, images and other methods of feedback were discussed and reviewed.

The meetings themselves were always informal. While I may have had an agenda, this was simply an overview designed to make sure we covered key areas rather than a structured list of questions. The meetings included coffee and followed the same outline as the tuition stage detailed above, namely:

- Check in, how the participant had been getting on including key issues such as work and family which may have arisen since last meeting
- Which practices had seemed most useful and reflection on this
- Key issues that had arisen
- Practice meditation together
- Discussion of period ahead

6.11.4 Final Meeting

A final meeting was held with each participant in which their use of nature based elements in their overall mindfulness practice was discussed. Their adoption of

specific practices was identified along with a broad discussion of the impact of practice on their daily lives.

Once again, recognising the individual characters, conditions and preferences of participants and their own time commitment, I sought to minimise the impact on their daily lives of my wanting to collect evidence. They made choices in the way the programme concluded for them. For some this was a video interview, for others final journal collation. The different methods chosen were:

- A record of how practices were incorporated into another activity (John Muir Award. Participant Greta)
- Video interviews (participants Greta, Crash, Meg and April)
- Outline of impacts for an article in a professional journal (Participant April)
- Images (participants Maggie, Greta, Barbara and Crash)
- Online Blog (Participant David)
- Journal entries (Participants Barbara and April)
- Video of a mindful walk (Participant Maggie)
- Transcripts of the interviews are attached at Appendix B.

6.12 Summary

This chapter has discussed how the research study bricolage was structured, with a pragmatism based on personal experience of living with chronic conditions. A mixed methods approach built on foundations of phenomenology was adopted and underpinned by an appreciation of the difficulties in daily life. From initial decisions resulting from the pilot study, through participant selection and choice of methods, it concludes by documenting the key stages of the training programme and the interview / reflection process to monitor progress. The following chapters introduce the participants and discuss the impact of the programme on their lives.

Chapter 7 - The Journeymen

It may be late when Nature cries

Enough!

As one day cry she will,

And man may have the wit to put her off

With shifts a season still

From the poem The Journeyman by Ralph Hodgson (1924)

7.1 Chapter overview

This chapter describes the developing practice of the research participants as a form of journey. A journey of people learning new skills, then seeking to master them. In undertaking this journey they participate in training, in exploring and discovering and in formalising their practice and use of nature based mindfulness in their daily lives, serving an apprenticeship in mindfulness. The word ‘Journeyman’ (which in this context applies equally to men or women) is taken from the traditional route of an apprenticeship, an early and still valid practice of knowledge management (Wiig, 2000). The apprentice would commence study with an established and experienced craftsperson (Master) authorised by their ‘guild’ or governing body to take on or teach an apprentice. Having gained experience the apprentice would be granted permission to leave training and to establish their own practice, becoming a ‘journeyman’ before eventually being seen to have mastered their craft (Calvert, 2014). The journeyman analogy also reflects the development of mindfulness as a self-management activity (Dufour et al., 2015; Gu et al., 2015), an activity that can

only be successful with the gaining of knowledge and the application of skills⁶. The chapter shows the difficulties faced by all participants and describes when and how nature based mindfulness has been helpful. It also illustrates the themes that having arisen in their feedback (interviews transcripts, journals etc.) and these are referred to in tables at the end of each participant section (n.b. themes are listed alphabetically).

7.2 Introduction

The focus of my research has been on how the participants apply the knowledge and techniques of the nature based mindfulness practice in their daily lives and how they consider, reflect and adapt practices to meet their needs. In this way they can be seen to serve an apprenticeship working with someone accredited to teach mindfulness to others (meeting UK Guidelines, Appendix E.2), progressing from someone who has some knowledge of mindfulness practice, through learning specific techniques, from meditative practices including nature base applications, through movement and reflection to become the journeyman. Someone able to use the techniques taught and engaging with the natural environment as a means to incorporating mindfulness more deeply into their everyday lives.

The following case studies illustrate the progress of some participants (I have not included myself in this section as my story is in Chapter 6. Meg is not included in this section as she was already a qualified mindfulness teacher with an established personal practice, her interview which was analysed using the same interpretative process as other participants reflections and interviews (transcript in Appendix B.1)

⁶ The route is also seen a valid method of mindfulness teacher training, the 'supervised pathway' see <http://www.mindfulnessteachersuk.org.uk>

and are compilations based on interviews, personal journals and other responses. More detailed discussion of these case studies, the themes and issues raised follows in the next chapter (Chapter 10) while the journals and interviews on which the studies and themes are based are available in the evidence sections of the appendices (Appendices A and B). Initial stages of the research study prioritised relationship building, between myself as researcher and participants. A key part of the relationship was identifying the shared experiences of dealing with chronic illness, promoting a mutual understanding, establishing trust and sense of sharing (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). This provided the essential confidence that little would be withheld in conversations. My own position also required a great deal of reflexivity, constantly reflecting on, and understanding how and why I made choices in what to include in analysing data and in these personal stories, switching between insider/outsider roles (Berger 2015) of researcher / participant. This to me reflects a key difference between the thematic approach taken and the more straightforward content analysis approach to reviewing transcripts and other material (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). The process I chose required constant review, initially looking as an observer with no knowledge, later as an observer with a health condition, finally as an observer with an understanding of mindfulness. In these studies I have used the participant's own words where they illustrate points raised.

7.3 Case study - Participant ID - David

David, a 60 year old male, retired on medical grounds from Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) in 2009. His medical retirement followed a number of years struggling with a long commute, South Lakeland to Manchester, and/or London and increasingly strident performance targets. His clinical diagnosis at the time was of Chronic Fatigue Syndrome / Myalgic Encephalopathy (CFS/ME) an illness that presented with severe and debilitating fatigue, pain in joints that limited his movement, and difficulty in sleeping.

7.3.1 The Journeyman

Exploring using mindfulness to assist his coping with ill health, David attended a Living Well with Pain and Illness course held at a local community centre. He appreciated the work on primary and secondary suffering and was able to notice how his resistance to the physical and mental experiences he had did make his condition and his perception of it worse.

“it is of little use trying to change that which I regard as the primary condition. It doesn't matter to me now where people say CFS comes from, I simply have to explore my experience today”.

However he described difficulty in establishing a daily meditation practice due to previous experiences in more formal settings (table 21), difficulty in sitting still due to pain and that he frequently fell asleep. In fact he described using some mediation practices to facilitate going to sleep rather than to develop mindfulness awareness.

As his illness progressed he became somewhat withdrawn, though made efforts to be supportive to a disabled friend who was to die early in 2014. At this time his own illness seems to flare with severe digestive problems, IBS (irritable bowel syndrome) like symptoms that also are felt by many longterm sufferers of CFS. This eventually restricted his ability to go for longer walks and he resorted to finding a sit spot just a ten minute walk away alongside the local canal.

“ Because of increasing stomach problems I’m finding that coming back to my breath is particularly soothing and helps me relax to the extent that I can choose whether to go for a walk or back to bed, rather than sitting stiffly in frustration ”.

Even though the canal is close to home this provided the opportunity to engage with the surroundings in a way that helped him cope with the rest of the day. Here is a poem from his personal journal.

Standing like a mountain rooted in the ground
Seeing clouds and thoughts drift by
Feeling the wind and the rain
Knowing yesterday has past
And tomorrow does not exist
There is only now and now and now

Thoughts may not be reality and that’s a fact
And it may not matter if you do or don’t
Just as long as you remember to breath
To walk mindfully on the earth
And to take the chance to dance with life

David

David was rushed to hospital on the 6th January and transferred to a hospice the next day. Sadly he died during the evening of Friday 9 January 2015. Further extracts from his journal including images and poems are in Appendix B.1.

7.3.3 Further Discussion

David was an unusual man, someone who had a real thirst for knowledge, not just for its own sake but to aid interpretation of his own life experience. As with other research study participants his experience, his sharing of thoughts, his ideas, all have clearly established themes (table 20) these are discussed in chapter ten.

From an early age David had identified the potential for nature as a realm for escape and engagement. As he matured he established a sense of connectedness to nature that then continued throughout his life as can be seen in his mountain walking activities and his choice of home location *'I sometimes think about moving, but this is a nice enough place to die'*.

However as he became ill, this sense of connection, though recognised, was not actively part of his own illness self-management until his cancer took hold, at which point he would visit 'sit spots' with friends and on his own. His journal, shown in more detail in Appendix B, raises an interesting issue, that of his move from Buddhism to Stoicism

'I am probably very much more Stoic than Buddhist. Right now feels like 99% to 1%. Seems to have all the good bits from Buddhism without the strangulated rebirth mystical stuff'.

Interesting that stoic philosophy emphasises living in accordance with nature and understanding the concepts of conditionality and connectedness (Greenslade 2015).

Table 20 - Themes from David's journey

These themes are based on interpretative analysis of David's journal entries and discussions that took place when reviewing the entries with him.

Theme	Sub themes	significant issues and statements
Art	appreciation, participation, expressiveness	Use of poetry both self composed and read (Larkins's Aubade - see journal entries). Musician, playing guitar in jazz combo's
Childhood	Abuse, Nature, Religion, Escape	physical and sexual abuse from his Catholic mother, whipped with a leather belt, escaping from the strictures of home life by exploring the coast line.
Ethics and Values	personal behaviour, responsibility	"My values were being compromised, every day I felt I was breaking all the speech precepts those of speech that is truthful, kindly, helpful and harmonious" His lack of a driving licence, having decided that owning a car and its impact on the environment could not be ethically justified
Impermanence	attitude to life and death	another example of life goes on, a nice enough place to die, Helps to keep me authentic
Kindness	Helping others, values	Supportive to a disabled friend. Kept the detail of his own illness a secret, so as not affect his son's 'A Level' progress
Learning	qualifications, relevance and application	exploring the esoteric, applying knowledge gained to life experience BA Religion, BA Law, MSc Systems
Meditation	persistence, difficulty	a futile exercise in wilfulness, an exercise in which his frustration grew at each attempt
Religion	Parents, Self	Mother's catholicism, father's evangelical Christianity. Own search of Sufism, Buddhism and final thoughts on Stoicism
Sense Awareness	smell, sight, sound, art	enjoying the peace, cobalt blue skies, freshness of high mountain pastures, public performance of a Bach cantata, rich spicy scent of May blossom, Lit through thunder clouds, with the big view, unsatisfactory state of dull bewilderment

7.4 Case Study – Participant ID - Crash

A 27 year-old man, Crash has already seen a wider slice of life than many of his age, having served as a medical assistant on the front line in Afghanistan, and with other specialist units of the Royal Marines before gaining a degree and then employment in the civil service.

A fit young man, though currently being investigated for unexplained periods of severe high blood pressure, Crash's chief complaint was bouts of anxiety while at University. These were sometimes so acute that arrangements were made for him to sit exams alone in a separate room. He undertook a programme of counselling with the university student support service, also taking part in an eight-week mindfulness programme, organised by his University. However he did not to maintain the practices taught beyond the eight-week programme's completion. Reasons cited for this included workload, desire to try other outdoor activities and not perceiving a benefit from the practices taught. On leaving university and while job hunting, he again suffered from anxiety related issues and attended the 'First Step'⁷ programme, part of the local IAPT (improving access to psychological therapies) service.

7.4.2 Discussion

As will be seen from Crash's interview transcript (Appendix B.4) his mindfulness practice may seem to some to be very 'ad hoc'

⁷ <https://www.cumbriapartnership.nhs.uk/our-services/mental-health/our-mental-health-services/first-step>

'it's more in the background and it is though something that remains an interest, but I just don't seem to get round to actually doing it' (B.4 Crash interview)

However, it is interesting to reflect on his choice of outdoor activities, predominantly fell running and rock climbing. In these activities you must pay constant attention to the way you move and to where your focus is, details such as the feel of the rock, or the surface you are running on including the smallest of details, for example is that rock slippery or how solid is the ground beneath your feet? Otherwise there is a risk you could fall. Crash also commented that if you lose your sense of breadth, your awareness of the whole landscape, how the weather is changing, what lies ahead, you could be moving into danger or missing the optimum route, the one you intended. He said his chosen activities

"give you more focus and ability to quieten everything else down in your mind".

In other words you become totally immersed in your activity, which means that even when you have a whole variety of thoughts in your mind when you start the activity, you are soon able to choose to respond to these in a way that allows you to focus on the moment, on the task in hand.

'you're doing a lead climb you are just focused solely on what you're doing at that time you don't have all those other things in the background'

When you are doing this you may be aware of the strain the body is under, how dire the weather closing in looks, yet you are also aware of opposite sensations, of the joy that a shaft of sunlight illuminating the path ahead brings, the elation of reaching the last handhold of the climb and pushing yourself over the edge of the rock and sitting in safety absorbing the euphoric feelings of success, of a route well climbed. These are all aspects of outdoor activities especially rock climbing that were discussed and agreed as part of Crash's reflection on mindfulness. He went on to comment

"I think that kind of activity is also good because nowadays many people just expect instant gratification for everything, when you're doing an activity like that then you can't control what's happening and you've got to be patient and just see what happens and that I think is a good counter balance to that instant gratification".

Such ability to work with such focus, and breadth awareness, to be able to hold the difficult and euphoric together, to make choices regardless of what was in your mind when you started is at the heart of the mindfulness practices described elsewhere in this thesis (Chapter 2) and is reflected in themes identified (Table 21). It is especially important when trying to build mindfulness into your daily life, as Crash said when talking about his lack of engagement in a regular formal sitting meditation practice

"I think practicing mindfulness in that context is maybe a bit flawed because it sort of suggests that you'll practice mindfulness and then you'll go off and you won't be practicing anymore, whereas I think if you actually want to do it properly it's something you apply in your entire life".

Table 21 - Themes from Crash's journey

Themes are based on interpretative analysis of the transcript of a video interview with Crash (Appendix B.4) and also on notes made following a discussion on his mindfulness practice during a walk

Theme	Sub theme	significant issues and statements
Family	Breakdown, moving around	Father's job Mother's relationship, abusive partner poor results at school
Fitness	Sport	Rowing Triathlon Fell running and adventure racing
Health	Anxiety, blood pressure, fitness	Effect on examinations, counselling, first step programme unknown reason - BP, tests
Meditation	Course, practice	Interest in self-development failed to engage feeling that activities allowed space to quieten mind sense that mindfulness was more than meditation
Nature	Childhood, Fraternal influence	Exploring Yorkshire Dales outdoor activities, diploma, working on land, interest in environment, weather, watching birds
Religion	Buddhism	Developed while serving in army always in the background
Values & ethics	Environment lifestyle	The work you choose the way you live
Youth	Fit, arrogance	Move from base of withdrawal as child? influencing life choices? Confidence in self and knowledge

7.5 Case Study - Participant ID - Greta

7.5.1 Early connections

Greta, a 58 year-old woman, was brought up in Cheshire, attending a small primary school where she was introduced to nature walks and biology projects, a prelude to a long interest in nature. This was consolidated by her Norwegian mother, as they spent many long summer holidays in Norway at the family summer cabin, something of a tradition in Norway⁸. She comments '*I think the Norwegians just lead a more outdoor life than the average British person*' also that '*their laws allowing people to walk anywhere and the availability of countryside probably means it is a more common pastime*'. They would go walking in the forest looking out for moose, picking blueberries and wild strawberries, swimming and walking on the beach and collecting buckets of fresh prawns from the shrimpers. This nature theme was maintained around the year as they would go blackberrying and picking mushrooms in the autumn, for country walks and picnics in Cheshire and Derbyshire and were involved in gardening too. She developed her nature interest and completed a degree in Biological Sciences, especially enjoying the practical elements of the course.

Moving from being a fit young adult she entered her mid forties with a stressful job, a difficult boss, a new partner and three (part time) step-children. She had her first mental breakdown. Some time off work, counselling, and free time cycling in the local country parks, gave her the chance to let her brain 'freewheel' and take in some "visual green" without any time pressures,

⁸ Friluftsliv - Henderson and Vikander 2007 - Chapter 4

'my immediate response was to get out into the countryside and go cycling and unhook my brain and simply drink in the green and that made me feel much better'.

She found exploring the area of the Mersey basin and the variety of country parks, with tree lined lanes and lakes beneficial primarily due to ease of access and traffic free routes.

7.5.2 Becoming a journeyman

Some work and very challenging family pressures led to two further mental breakdowns, although she was able to identify the second one, before in her words *'falling off the cliff'*. She recognised when having a problem it is too late to take techniques down from a virtual shelf to use, she needed to establish and maintain a regular mindfulness practice. She feels having a very supportive partner, who understands the difficulties faced both at home and work, along with a network of friends, is important.

Very aware that one element of mindfulness training is the recognition that thoughts are not facts, she questions her own thoughts and abilities, and wonders whether this is from childhood issues, such as the messages given in the Catholic school attended (guilt) or from relationships with her mother and sister who would often be critical of aspirational viewpoints. She feels in practicing mindfulness and especially connecting with nature, that there is no judgment, there is simply recognition of what is happening in the moment. While loving the idea of doing so non-judgmentally she

struggles to apply this in her own life. It is going out into nature that she feels allows her to really practice being non-judgmental, to simply appreciate the beauty that exists, the peace that is available, the fact that everything is constantly changing, not good or bad, just different *'there is a real value in that bigger view' and it 'opens yourself up to engaging with the world'*.

She particularly enjoyed the concept of the sit spot (10.2.2). A place where she is able to enjoy the view, the surroundings and the wildlife around it, no matter what the weather. In fact she has a number of sit spots, one on the coast, one in woodland, even simply sitting in the back yard (appendix C.5.6) which she's decorated with a whole variety of plants and herbs to provide an immediate sanctuary when the weather is reasonable.

In terms of self management of her chronic health conditions, she believes in greater control, more time for meditation and an appreciation of nature and the chance to make her own health a priority, rather than her job - hence the decision to retire in the autumn (2015) and focus on healthy living and more connection with the planet!

7.5.3 Discussion

Greta is another participant who had a rich exposure to nature as part of childhood experiences. For Greta, they were the result of positive influences, incorporating the Norwegian influence of *Friluftsliv* discussed earlier (Chapter 4), both while in Norway and from the teaching and experience of a Norwegian parent. Linked to this positive experience though, were less supportive aspects, such as the messages from

school and home (from her mother and other relatives, though she feels definitely not her father!), which were to be prepared to settle for less, to strive less and an acceptance of guilt when things were difficult. Issues at school also led to distraction (fundraising for the school) rather than focus on exams leading to lower than expected A level results. Despite this, Greta's personal abilities and drive came to the fore and she tackled the issue head on, identifying a university and course she could attend rather than waiting for clearing. Such demonstration of her personal motivation, her ability to achieve results and a desire to be the best she can be are evident throughout her responses, whether through interview or journals and discussions.

One key aspect of Greta's practice that comes to the fore is that of compassion, a core element of traditional mindfulness practice and this programme. Asked how her family, friends and colleagues would view her, the responses included supportive, interested, caring, often putting others first. Her managerial style is inclusive not overbearing and she believes mindfulness helps her here especially helping others especially in terms of communication and relationships stating

"I think the mindfulness has helped me to do that and to not only get more out of each day than I'm spending with the vulnerable volunteers myself, but also making sure that they get more out of that as well".

While she prefers not to focus on minutiae, her work is thorough, with a desire to do well but acceptance of what is possible.

It is possible that the impact of this desire to help and be there for others has a direct impact on Greta's own health. Often ignoring her own needs has led in the past to breakdown. Even so, perhaps due to upbringing, feelings of guilt, simply a desire to help others, she feels at fault when ill. A fundamental part of mindfulness based compassion is learning that you can't help others unless you are in a reasonable place yourself and can meet your own needs in order to be there for others. In the same way that airline safety announcements instruct parents and carers to reach for their own oxygen masks before attending to others, so Greta is trying to build care for herself into her life (table 22), hence the desire to make more time for meditation, for nature, to be rather than to do, as she states

“you have some time for sitting and meditating, some time for short walks to and from work, out and about with the dog and then ideally some days in the week when you can build in something which is a longer input and if you can get all of those things going then you have a better chance in my case of not having all the balls fall out of the air”.

Table 22 - Themes from Greta's journey		
Based on interpretative analysis of Greta's journal, interview transcript and transcript of discussion between Greta and fellow research study participant Maggie		
Theme	Subtheme	significant statements
Aging	health issues, children, partner	decision to retire, I have reached a stage (aged 60) when I feel weary
Childhood	guilt	messages from school, mother and sister
Children	single parent, step-children	life as a single parent, changes when all the children reached the end of secondary education
Community	local, friends	setting up a community food project
Culture	Norway, friluftsliv, Collecting food	family summer cabin, something of a tradition in Norway. Nature theme was maintained around the year by my mother
Environment	John Muir Award, work	work in an environmental charity
Finance	children, pressure, stress,	Financial pressure due to a lower salary.
Health	gout, discomfort, arthritis, weight, public health	Always had to be careful about putting on weight
Mental and emotional wellbeing	Change, Stress, habits,	Made some specific changes to how I live in order to deal with my stress levels and to engage with what I know helps me feel better.
Nature	childhood experience	nature walks and biology projects watching people benefit from connecting with nature, start of what has been a long interest in nature, rewarding to sit watching
Physical wellbeing	sport, active	fairly fit and took regular exercise, free time cycling, focus on healthy living
Religion	Buddhism, Catholicism, guilt, symbolism	messages given in the Catholic school I attended (guilt), not attracted to long silence or complex symbolism
Work	management role, bullying, supportive	bullying by my boss

7.6 Case Study - participant ID - Maggie

Maggie is a 63 year old former nursing sister who retired on medical grounds, then worked for a community based charity for ten years, before her health deteriorated further. Maggie still works in a voluntary capacity with her local housing association, with community radio, and with the homelessness charity Emmaus.

Maggie's history of chronic health problems is a testament to her own stamina, determination and sheer capacity to pick herself up and not only keep going but to start again, something she has had to do many times. This history is also one that shows not only the strength of the National Health Service (NHS), but also its weaknesses. It is included here in some detail in order to demonstrate the extent of suffering that can be included under the label 'chronic illness' and demonstrate what has been described in chapter two, that many patients with chronic illnesses have comorbidities, all adding to difficulties in the provision of clinical interventions, personal self-management and contributing to the rising cost of health care.

At 18 months old, Maggie was diagnosed with Bronchial Pneumonia and just a few months later with Tuberculosis. As a result the first eleven years of her life were under the scrutiny of a consultant Maggie describes as

“being very interested in every aspect of my wellbeing in an age when this did not happen”.

This is demonstrated by the fact that in common with much medical practice in the 1950s, she was sent to convalesce by the sea in North Wales and Lancashire. The consultant would visit her at these locations as well as at home, even bringing ‘gifts’ of cheese, butter and healthy foods to aid her mother’s restricted budget at a time of financial hardship. In discussion Maggie sees these periods of convalescence as the forerunner to a love of the coastline.

Apparently her life expectancy at age seven was forecast as just two years. The same consultant continued to monitor Maggie’s progress until she was 16 years old. At this point in wanting to pursue a career as a nurse, Maggie had to have a medical and this same consultant said that while without a doubt she was unfit to enter the profession according to the regulations, he had seen her determination throughout her life so far and so passed her fit to continue. It is worth questioning whether this determination to continue regardless of circumstances becomes an issue in Maggie’s engagement with mindfulness practices and this will be discussed in more detail later.

7.6.1 A journey - but end not in sight

Maggie joined the study in 2013 and although she has continued to have further problems, ranging from another MI to problems with a shoulder and with further breathing difficulties, she has wanted to feel more in control herself, regaining something from the medical professionals commenting

“I’d had weeks and weeks and weeks of being in a hospital bed, coming home and with all good intentions being cared for to the point of suffocation and that sounds

very selfish but there just came a point when I needed to go out” and “I needed the fresh air but I needed to feel, I needed to feel health wise that I was getting somewhere”.

While continuing to struggle with some aspects of a mindfulness practice she has found it beneficial to have a range of nature based mindfulness in daily life activities which she feels are easier to engage with, in particular those involving exploring nature connectedness (table 18). As described above, a particular issue has been Maggie’s concern for the perceptions of others, she will feel vulnerable, worried that people will laugh, make fun of her, even including members of her own family. She commented

“meditating downstairs I didn’t find easy at all. Even though I was unlikely to be interrupted, I felt that downstairs I was exposed”

and when talking about her son’s attitude to her connecting with nature by going outside, she said

“he promptly rang his sister, cos they like to do the ganging up bit”.

In describing how nature impacts on her daily life she makes specific reference to the seasons, saying that autumn makes her feel peaceful and calm while winter makes her feel sad and forlorn, reminding her of a tenuous grip on life. Spring does give her hope of new things to come commenting

“the first flowers in the spring when I stand for hours watching snowdrops and crocuses. All the things that are the signs of spring. Being out in the garden and just wondering how these flowers have survived winter just gives you a sense of purpose in the fact that life cycles carry on”,

Maggie feels summer seems like the culmination of nature’s miracle. She thinks developing a connection with nature helps her cope as she puts it:

“with all my illnesses, worries and stresses”.

It seems that the constant thread of medical intervention, consultations, operations and the worries and opinions of relatives all combine to limit Maggie’s desire to establish a regular practice. In addition she has a strong desire to help others, especially her grandchildren and baby great grandson, stating:

‘I’m having to look after somebody who is dependent on me and that is a state that I loved’

and

‘I like to be needed. I’ve always liked to be needed’.

However this activity means she often makes efforts to ‘over-ride’ her own health in order to be there for others, including helping as a volunteer for community organisations (Table 23).

So while she clearly enjoys her connections to nature, ‘*gives me hope*’ and ‘*it makes me feel good*’, she feels that her constant cycle of hospital appointments, treatment and consultant visits, family responsibilities and community responsibilities mean she is not reaping the full benefits that a well established nature based mindfulness practice could bring.

Table 23: Themes from Maggie’s journey		
Theme	Sub Theme	Significant Issues and Statements
Community	Contribution, belonging, responsibility	Sense of wanting to be needed, and responsibility for community. Emmaus, Groundwork, New Charter Housing, Local radio, Conservative Party
Family	Children, attitudes	Laughed at, cared for, ‘bullied’, worries of and for children, desire of family to wrap her in cotton wool, her desire to be needed by younger family members
Health	Life-long issues, acute, chronic, criticism, convalescence	Life threatening, long term illnesses that have required surgical intervention. Interested in every aspect of my wellbeing. Continued involvement of medical specialists, lack of coordination between disciplines, active investigations and intervention. Lack of appreciation of impact of own actions
Nature	Convalescence, connection	Started in childhood love of the coastline helps cope with all illnesses sense of relating to seasons
Work	Dignity, self-respect, paid, voluntary	Determination to continue, desire to do something worthwhile, to be useful

7.7 Case Study - Participant ID - April

April is a 56 year-old woman who has suffered with anxiety for more than 20 years.

Anxiety is typically defined a feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease about something with an uncertain outcome, a nervous disorder marked by excessive uneasiness and apprehension, typically with compulsive behaviour or panic attacks⁹.

A health professional who took time out of her career to bring up children who are now in their twenties, she returned to work some years ago but has been faced with increasing bouts of anxiety. These have prevented her from undertaking activities such as hill walking which she used to enjoy but was forced to seek help when changes at work were forcing her to feel under greater pressure to perform in a certain way.

7.7.1 Becoming a journeyman

April found a range of activities valuable, for example the sit spot was something she'd never ever been able to do, just to stop and sit in a place, feeling it was utterly alien to her, that sitting meant inviting stresses in. She wrote in her programme journal that it was really hard saying "*it felt dead weird at first*". But she quickly found that she could actually

'sense he whole body like a coiled spring with the tension and then could actually feel the spring releasing, unwinding and sometimes having a feeling as if time had actually stopped',

⁹ NICE (2011) *Generalised anxiety disorder and panic disorder (with or without agoraphobia) in adults, guideline CG113*

that she was quite immersed in the place. She felt this is really valuable. Her sit spot was on the way home from work, and though she wanted to get home she would often spend 30 or 40 minutes there because it felt good, in what she described as '*a very internal way*'. She also said:

'I have a sense that unconsciously I have been clearing the 'mindtop' and filing the day into appropriate folders. I am feeling ready to go home now'.

She was surprised to feel she'd been going through life and the environment thinking she'd seen it, but actually never really seeing it and feeling glad that for at least one part of every day she'd noticed what was going on around her, as reflected in the following poem of hers.

Dancing butterflies,
Warm evening sun,
Gentle rushing of the weir,
Startling pink Campion.
Warm evening sun,
Curlew calling
Butterflies again

(One of April's poems, composed while at her sit spot)

She made a range of changes, trying to complete a meditation practice, usually the body scan, each day. She feels much better now at not feeling bad at missing a meditation, as it is something to be practiced in the long term.

She takes advantage of spaces at work to complete the three minute breathing space meditation, bringing herself back to the present. Describing driving to work as often pre-occupied with all the tasks to achieve, she has started to focus attention on the traffic as a means of staying in the present moment joking that it has the added bonus of improving her driving.

She talks about awareness of thoughts not representing reality, not being facts; rather mental events that will pass and can be observed but choosing to be unaffected by them, feeling that this is hard to do and is definitely work in progress. She uses thoughts of her sit spot to avoid slipping into a negative thinking mode, thinking to fully appreciate the nature of things – good or bad before they change because nature has taught her nothing stays the same forever.

She was quite disturbed to note the never-ending commentary of work-related issues that pervade her mind, and had been unaware that these thoughts were so prevalent. She's hopeful that practicing mindfulness over time will help manage these thoughts more skilfully.

She's noticed her own states including a 'frantic-rush' mode, and is learning to take immediate steps to stop, feeling very good when she does that, noticing the tension immediately dissolve. Using her sit spot after work she feels she has left the world of work but have not yet entered the world of home and all the different issues that entails. She comments:

“Physically I’m much less tense and much more relaxed, if I didn’t do it and went straight home I’d still be carrying all the day with me into home”.

Overall she feels less stressed by work, recognising that her anxiety varies from day to day anyway. April finds regular meditation improves her sleep and she is going for more walks now, including longer ones and managing her life much better.

She describes one analogy learned from mindfulness, in dealing with thoughts, where the mind is the sky and the thoughts are the clouds which pass across it. Before a walk to Easdale Tarn (Fig. 14) she was quite anxious and noticed looming dark clouds and a shower which passed through and she reflected that her anxiety, which was quite bad, was this dark grey cloud and that like the cloud she didn’t know how long she would be under it. However she knew that dark clouds didn’t last forever and acknowledged that like the cloud her anxiety would not last forever.



Fig. 14 Easdale Tarn, Cumbria, a popular but more remote part of the English Lake District, where April recognised the value of her nature based mindfulness practice

April describes life as richer now and not so frightening, having more options, feeling she manages feelings better. She feels *“it’s OK just to be anxious, that’s OK, just be anxious, it doesn’t particularly feel very nice, but actually it’s OK”*. That more possibilities are opening up and that nature is like breathing and as long as she can see and hear and feel, she’s got that to focus on (Table 24). Asked about mindfulness and her work she replied:

“I have really been thinking about mindfulness at work and how taking opportunities to be mindful as much as I can throughout the day makes a fantastic difference in the level of stress I feel each day. I stop at the end of the day on my way home to write my programme journal and I don’t feel tense, rigid, there is no tense knot in my stomach, my shoulders don’t ache and my heart is not pounding. It is a complete contrast to how I used to feel at the end of work”.

Professionally she thinks mindfulness does help reduce the stress felt by health visitors. It helps in managing caseloads, and in prioritising work. Taking time out by having a ‘breathing space’ provides a chance to think more clearly about what is necessary or important. She claims that it helps her recognise the need to look after herself as a practitioner who is the client’s main resource, as well as for her own sanity as a health visitor. She also feels that it helps her manage the conflict between organisational needs and professional practice. When working with difficult or unappealing clients she believes the kindly awareness practice helps to change perspective. She comments that the space helps by preparing to be open to the next

client and their issues while drawing a line under the previous visit, allowing her to fully attend to the next client. Figure 15 shows some of the thought processes that occur when she meets clients.

Figure 15: April's reflection on thought processes
 diagram produced by April and included in her journal

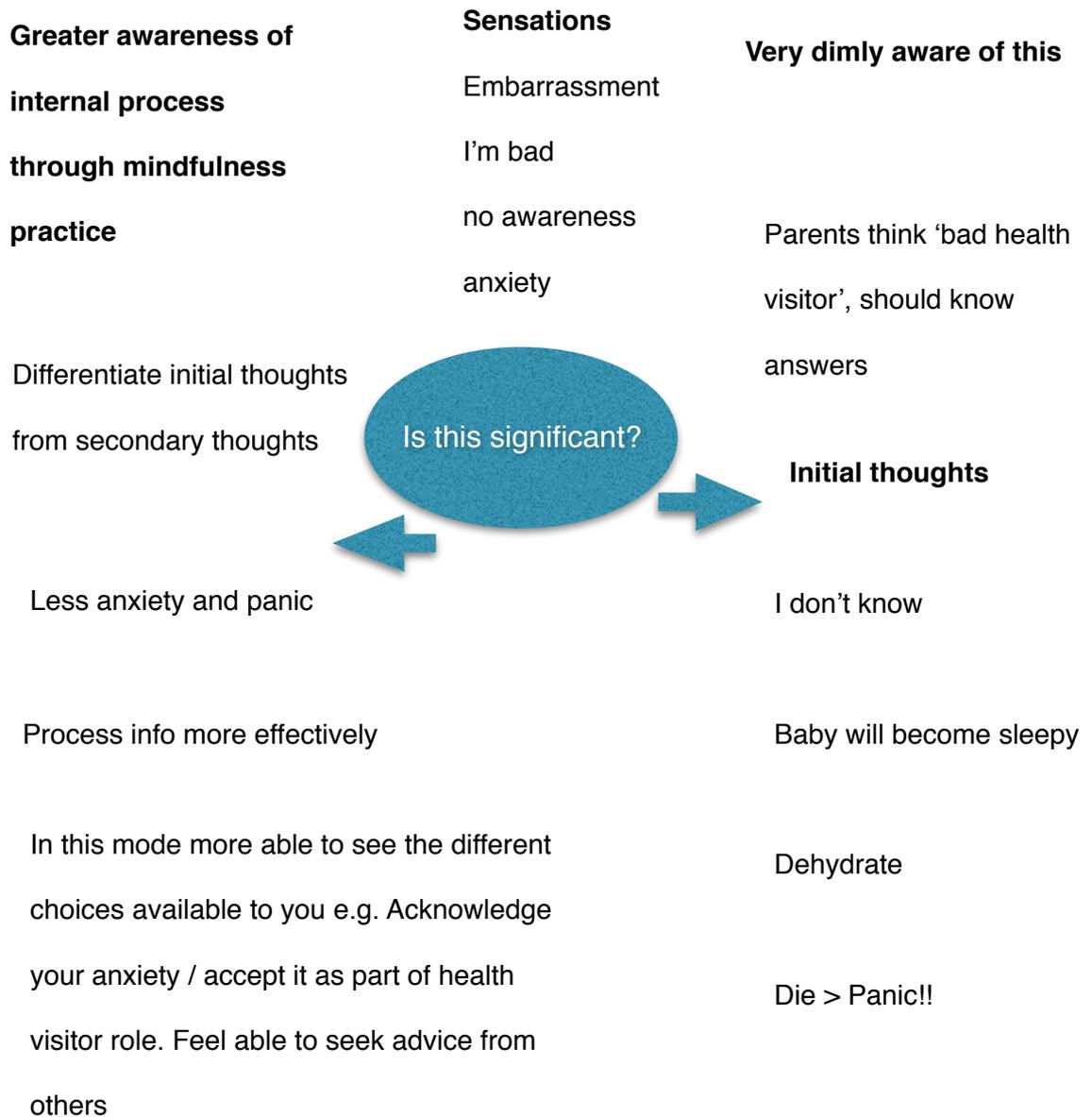


Table 24 - Themes from April's journey		
Themes based on interpretative analysis of April's journal and video interview transcript		
Theme	Sub-Themes	Significant issues and statements
Family	Career break, children, age, expectations	Difficulty with daughter, intrusion of son, husband's retirement
Health	Anxiety, fitness	Amazed and semi-horrified at the continual stream of scary thoughts and images that my mind endlessly generates. I start the day with a 3 minute meditation and can identify all the usual feelings of anxiety about the new day
Mental well being	Thoughts, stress, anxiety	Feels like a coiled up spring, feel the tension immediately dissolve. changing my relationship to my thoughts. amazed and semi-horrified at the continual stream of scary thoughts and images that my mind endlessly generates
Nature	Awareness, access,	My surprise actually at my realisation that I'd been going through life and the environment thinking I'd seen it, but actually I'd never really seen it natural environment is also always there knew a bit of the world in a way that I'd never known it before
Practices	Usefulness, sit spot, body scan	The sit spot was something I'd never ever been able to do, regular meditation improves my sleep Think OK this is really valuable, surprise actually at my realisation, usually the body scan each day. If I notice my thinking has slipped into a negative thinking mode, I can recall sitting in my sit spot
Physical wellbeing	Walking, gym, tennis	'Life', is richer now I'm going for walks now and I have managed much better
Work	Clients, babies, practice, stress, self management, conflict	Mindfulness does help reduce the stress, need to look after myself, be mindful as much as I can throughout the day makes a fantastic difference conflict between organisational needs and professional practice my own sanity as a health visitor

7.8 Case study - participant ID - Barbara

Barbara is a 50 year old (49 on entering study), former primary school teacher, married with a husband and two sons, both of which are over 18 years old. She took medical retirement from work, not simply because of her illnesses, but because of bullying from the headteacher and members of the school management team.

Although receiving extensive medical support including consultant led investigations and treatment, Barbara continues to suffer from chronic back pain, ME/CFS and bowel problems. Her journal contains many references to her pain and attempts to either control it with drugs *'I had to use a large amount of oxynorm (morphine)'* and *'I want to go on gabapentin again'*, or through activity *'pain bad this morning but battled through'* and *'some pain this morning but kept active'*.

Barbara joined the programme having previously attended a 'Breathing Space' mindfulness programme in Blackpool. She reported finding the programme enjoyable, especially meeting others, but had been unable to integrate the practices taught into her daily life. Since retiring Barbara seems to have made great attempts to live what she considers a normal life, one in which she is free to meet with friends *'Looking forwards to seeing my friends'* and family and undertake activities sometimes to the detriment of her own health.

It is clear from Barbara's journals and reflective discussion that she has a real desire to be well and active. Unfortunately this desire can be counter-productive *'I am*

suffering from my hectic day' and *'I was shattered so went home'*. It is easy to see through the numerous journal comments (Appendix A.4) of *'must pace myself better'* that her efforts to be mindful are overcome by the desire to engage with others. What Barbara perceives as to living as normal a life as possible *'my hectic day yesterday'*. It is also apparent that many of her family and friends follow a philosophy of "don't sit about, getting out will be good for you". Likewise her sons refer to her meditation as "have you had a nice sleep?" suggesting difficulty in communicating the issues she is facing.

Linked to this is a responsiveness to others, a kindness to others that in a well established mindfulness practice would be balanced with a kindness to self, a recognition and communication of her own needs. The journal provides many references to attempts to please others even when in pain.

'Pain again in the morning. Henry phoned to see if I wanted to go out for lunch at Fly Fisheries and I said yes',

'Met Kath B for lunch, tried to be supportive as she's having a rough time. Julie came in afternoon so I took her to see Liam's flat. Later pain came back'.

Barbara did maintain a regular 'sit spot' practice. However this often became another example of 'doing' rather than 'being' with Barbara using the time to draw and even to think of other activities as this journal entry illustrates (Appendix A.4)

“Sat in garden and noticed how rusty the chiminea has got. The grill is starting to corrode away at the front. Maybe it’s time to wire brush it and respray although I do quite like the rustic character”!

Barbara also seems to feel that the meditation practices should help remove her pain rather than helping her develop a different relationship to it *‘still uncomfortable, go to meditate, but no better’* and *‘It helped a little to get through pain, but needed my medication’*. Some of this response is because she is so active that she gets tired, overwhelmed by pain and then needs to rest, at which point meditation does help because it slows her down *‘did some meditation which really relaxed me’*.

In summary Barbara is receiving active medical attention, sometimes uncoordinated between providers which I feel is a barrier to her recognition of the need to take responsibility (Blixen et al., 2016), something Barbara acknowledges. She reflects she actively seeks out new treatment options such as art therapy, hydro-therapy even this mindfulness programme, perhaps seeking a ‘magic’ solution. In addition her view of self-management is one of managing to do everything desired despite the pain. Mindfulness and connectedness to nature seem two added burdens to such a full social agenda (Table 25).

Table 25 - Themes from Barbara's Journey		
Themes based on interpretative analysis of Barbara's journal and notes from discussion of journal entries.		
Theme	Sub-Themes	Significant issues and statements
Community	Helping others belonging	Local ME group XEED wanting to help with Self- management UK
Family	Husband, sons, parents, helping	Husband became aggressive when challenged, son's expected responses, Family paid little attention to condition
Friends	Meeting, helping	Enjoyed meeting and helping friends even when own condition flared up
Health	Back, bowel, pain, consultants, programmes, counselling, hydrotherapy, Art Therapy,	Ongoing round of doctor, consultant, osteopath, new therapies
Medication	Pain, side effects,	Enjoyed talking about the medications, identifying with condition
Mental well being	Stress	Wanted to be fully active and would get stressed when pain got in way Felt not listened to by doctors (and family)
Nature	Pets, Flowers	Drawings in journal walking dogs
Physical wellbeing	Walking, swimming,	Walks on canal, dog walking, hydrotherapy
Practices	Sit spot, meditation	Sit spots in garden and near caravan meditation often used as attempt to alleviate pain (unsuccessfully)
Work	Bullying, enjoyment	Bullied as a teacher but enjoyed work done

7.9 Summary

This chapter has provided an insight into the lives of the research participants, in particular what it is to live with chronic illness (Thorne et al., 2003). In doing so it has illustrated how despite perhaps a single diagnosis e.g anxiety, the participants face a complex range of issues (Sav et al., 2015), often additional related conditions (e.g. Maggie, heart and lungs), at other times coping with work colleagues or family (Greta, April, Barbara and Maggie), expectations of others (all) and even facing death (David).

The next chapter examines the themes identified through discussions, journals and interviews, highlighting common experiences and discussing responses to the nature based mindfulness approaches taken in the research programme.



PERSONAL REFLECTION

In discussion, review and reflection with participants including interpreting their comments, I became very aware of my own prejudices. Some of these were as a teacher - *why haven't they done what was demonstrated or asked?* Others were as someone with a chronic condition - *'well that doesn't seem so bad what are they getting worked up about'*. Some were simply as a person - *'I wouldn't be talking to this person normally'*! The important thing I found was to be reflexive, to recognise my response, understand where it was coming from and act accordingly.

Chapter 8 - Discussion

*I may not have gone where I intended to go,
but I think I've ended up where I needed to be*
(Adams, 1988)

8.1 Introduction

8.1.1. What we share

In keeping with the Bricolage approach I offered each participant in this study a mechanism of response to suit their own circumstances, enabling them to help me construct . Some chose keeping a journal (April, David, Barbara) others methods such as video interviews (Crash, Maggie, Meg). What is important is that the process chosen became part of their practice, part of the reflection on daily life rather than an added burden within it, hence the degree of choice and the emphasis on freedom to do as much or as little as appropriate. In practicing mindfulness, kindness to self meant not overdoing any activity to the extent it became onerous, rather doing enough that the benefit of doing so could be appreciated, acted on and deepened.

8.1.2 Data Analysis

All the verbal and written responses, including journal entries, were transcribed at the start of the analytical process. Using the IPA principles outlined by Smith, Flowers & Larkin (2009) each transcript was then read a number of times, including if appropriate, reading in conjunction with observing the interview or discussion video it originated from. Notes were made of significant statements, or areas for further exploration. These were discussed with the relevant participant to ensure accuracy,

reliability and validity of interpretation (Drost, 2011). Transcripts (including those of my own journal as a participant) were then re-examined to identify themes. Further examination of these themes involved grouping into clusters, or superordinate themes. This process was repeated for all participants, with care being taken that each was viewed in isolation from others to ensure that each interpretation was independently arrived at i.e. deliberately seeking to avoid searching for themes already identified, instead viewing each transcript as new. A comparison of individual themes showed that there were a number common to most or all participants. Where these apply to 50% or more of participants (percentage chosen to eliminate commonality due to location, type of illness, etc.) they are shown in Table 26.

Table 26. Main themes identified by study participants		
Themes resulting from analysis by the author of journals, interviews and discussions		
Superordinate Theme	Subordinate Themes	Illustration
Childhood	Parental Influence Safety/escape	Crash taken on activities in Yorkshire Greta friluftsliv in Norway David escape to fens
Family	Children, Adults, Support,	Influence on children of parents including marital issues (Crash, David, Greta, Meg, self)
Health	chronic, self- management, mental, physical	Personal responsibility (Greta and Meg), physical activity (Crash and self) Issues of medical influence (Barbara and Maggie)
Practices	Sit spot, sense awareness	images of sit spots (Appendix C.5)
Religion	Resistance, Philosophy	<i>'I'd rejected church when I was about 14 and I didn't want to have anything to do ever again with anything I deemed to be a religion'</i> (Meg Appendix B.1). Greta and myself spoke about impact of catholic schooling, David spoke about evangelistic parents.
Work	Expectations Bullying	Greta and Barbara spoke about bullying while David, Greta and April talked about the demands of work
Frustration	Personal, Family, Health service	April and Greta felt conditions at work were difficult, especially changing expectations and desire to meet certain targets. Barbara and Maggie spoke about issues with family expectations and responses. Everyone felt their own responses changing on a day by day basis.

The themes common to all participants (including those resulting from interviews with Meg) are shown alphabetically in Table 27.

Table 27: Common Themes amongst Participants in the study

Theme	April	Barbara	Crash	David	Greta	Maggie	Meg	Myself
Aging		•		•	•	•		
Art (all areas)		•		•			•	•
Childhood		•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Family	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Health	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Meditation	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Movement	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Nature	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Regular Activity	•		•		•		•	•
Religion			•	•	•		•	•
Senses	•		•		•	•		•
Volunteering	•	•	•		•	•		•
Work	•	•	•	•	•			•

8.1.3. Thoughts on themes

The issue of childhood connection to nature is discussed in section 10.2.1, but some of the elements of the theme of childhood participants discussed (David, 9.3; myself, 6.2; Maggie, 9.6; Crash, 9.4, Meg, B.1) were less positive. The fact that some viewed nature as providing a place of safety or escape (Dallago et al., 2009), whether from violent parents, family discord or troubles at school (David, Meg, Crash, myself) suggests that people learn to cope with difficulties at an early age (Benard, 1995; Goldstein & Brooks, 2012). Family experiences were only partially positive (ibid.), with some parents encouraging connections with nature (Meg, Greta, Crash, Maggie, Barbara), yet others contributing to problems through lack of support and motivation (Crash, Meg, Greta, myself). Likewise the same applies to thoughts on religion. While I had little appreciation of the value of attending a Jesuit Grammar School, others were moved away from religion by experiences that were less than caring (Meg, David, Greta) (Reinart et al., 2015). Interestingly given the thoughts in Chapter 3 about the secularisation of mindfulness, some participants (Meg, Crash, David, Greta, myself), having learned and developed values of caring and compassion, were drawn to the very tradition where the mindfulness path was first promulgated.

A key theme of this study is the self-management of health and wellbeing (Chapters 2 & 10.3). While all participants (including myself) lived with chronic conditions, the participants with active medical (active here referring to ongoing medical intervention) conditions (Barbara & Maggie) were the ones who benefitted less from the programme. Their journals and interviews showing an engagement with nature and mindfulness, but a possibly a lack of motivation to manage their condition,

always waiting for the next doctor's appointment (Maggie) or trying another therapy or drug (Barbara). Other participants (David, Crash, Greta, April, Meg) did recognise the value of taking control of their condition directly '*I was living my life in a very unsustainable way. I felt I was running away from pain..... and I needed to be able to do something different*' (Meg, B.1), realising it was up to them to get the most out of their life (in David's case stopping the drug intervention that meant he was unaware much of the time) '*I have to say I am really, really, really glad to stop the chemo*' (David, A.1), and that they were unlikely to improve without that taking of responsibility. However this also caused a degree of frustration with their own ability to manage '*I didn't find it easy at all*' (Maggie, C.4) what for some were changing or new symptoms of their illness or response to it. There was also a feeling that Health Care Professionals (HCPs) were not always able to appreciate this frustration and its complexity (Lorig et al., 2001; Anderson & Funnell, 2005; Hudon et al., 2012 & 2015).

For some (Greta, April, Meg, Crash, myself) our practice helped us make choices about how we work, the work we do and the time we devote to it (Hultsch et al., 1999). For others their illnesses meant they could no longer work (David, Barbara, Maggie) and were now looking at how they could get more from the time they had available to them. Given the rise in awareness of equality, health and safety, and other types of management training, a significant number of participants (April, Barbara, Crash, David, Greta, Maggie) felt their work or sometimes the way they were managed impacted negatively on their wellbeing. All still working felt that the practices undertaken in this study were helping in mitigating the impact of their work.

As is clear from discussion about their journeys (Chapter 8), Barbara and Maggie have a clear desire to have as normal a life as possible despite their illnesses. This shows in their themes linked to volunteering (Maggie), friends (Barbara) and family (both). It is possible these desires also have an impact on the self-management of their illnesses perhaps making choices that suit others rather than themselves.

8.2 Identifying how individuals engage with their natural environment

8.2.1 Nature and childhood

For all participants their engagement has grown from an influence of, and connection with, the natural environment that started in their childhood (Chen-Hsuan Cheng, & Monroe, 2012). This ranges from encouragement to explore and engage with nature (Greta, Barbara and Crash),

‘(school) Introduced me to nature walks and biology projects and I think this was the start of what has been a long interest in nature’ (Greta).

‘This nature theme was maintained around the year by my mother’ (Greta).

‘Sat gazing at Farleton Knott with its limestone pavement with scree and gorse bushes. Brought back lots of happy memories as child spent up on the Knott’ (Barbara)

‘Periods were often spent engaged in activities such as camping, walking and staying..... encouraged to explore and develop skills in rock climbing and water-based activities such as sailing and kayaking’ (Crash).

through to finding the natural environment to be a place of safety in which to escape family life (David, Meg and myself);

'escaping from the strictures of home life by exploring the coast line.... the nature reserves of Foulness Island, enjoying the peace of the coast and extensive mudflats where he could spend hours watching birds' (David).

(Interest in nature came from) *'my mum and partly being in nature was a safe place to be, it wasn't at home, it was outdoor exploring the streams and...'* (Meg)

'It was escaping from others that started my engagement with the outdoors, with nature. Going for long walks, camping, climbing and spending hours just watching, the sky, rivers, trees, flora and fauna, all combining to create a space where I felt safe' (Myself, Chapter 6)

through to it providing a place of convalescence (Maggie).

'was sent to convalesce by the sea in North Wales and Lancashire'.

'sees these periods of convalescence as the forerunner to a love of the coastline'.

This influence raises a concern about the way children in today's society perceive nature often through TV and internet access (Corraliza et al., 2012;) rather than actual experience and the role of teachers (Fägerstam, 2012) and other adults in the development of a nature connection (Corraliza et al., 2012; Louv, 2012; Sandry, 2013; Tremblay et al., 2015). As we've seen all participants referred to connections with nature as a child including finding nature a place of safety (David, Meg, myself). Yet we can see limitations in children's ability to engage with nature (Chen-Hsuan Cheng & Monroe 2012) from the attitude of parents and teachers (Moss, 2012) ranging from

the perception of risk (Withington, 2011; Sandry, 2013) to the interaction with technology (Staiano, et al., 2015).

There is a growing evidence base recognising these concerns and promoting an engaging and nurturing relationship with nature for children. The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB 2013), writers (Louv, 2006 & 2012; Mortlock, 2009) and researchers across the world (Chawla, 2007; Chen-Hsuan Cheng & Monroe, 2012; Tremblay et al., 2015; Windhorst & Williams, 2015) all promote the value of childhood connections to the natural environment.

8.2.2 Engaging through Sense Awareness and a ‘Sit Spot’

One of the key issues with understanding connection to, and engagement with nature addressed by the programme, was how participants used their senses (Burns, 1998). To start with they were encouraged by specific activities such as sound meditation, though it became apparent that some extra support was needed. The following mind map (fig. 25) illustrates some of the issues I raised during the study to help participants engage with their senses.

Teaching people to use their senses illustrated how unaware we become in our daily lives. We are so used to seeing what is directly in front of us or whatever is most attractive (or shouts the loudest!).

Fig. 16 - Fine Tuning the senses



Mindmap produced by the author as a teaching aid

'In stark contrast to how I usually look at the park, that is I look but I'm not sure I really see it' and 'Stopping to look is a really novel experience, I'm beginning to like it' along with 'I'm so busy doing things the rest of the time, days go by and I don't even know what the weather was like!' (April).

The sense awareness inventory (SAI) (Burns, 1998 & 2010) proved valuable not only as an inventory but as a guide to encourage different use of the senses throughout the programme. It was used at the start of the programme, during it and at the end. In doing so it highlighted not only a change in breadth of awareness (number of entries) but also depth with greater specificity e.g. an entry of 'snow' at the start of the programme developed to the 'geometric pattern of the snowflake and how it melts'.

Such a change is supported elsewhere through the improvements in observation and description forming two of the five facets of mindfulness (Baer 2011 & Appendix G. 1.2).

'I can't walk very far but sometimes I can get completely immersed in a raindrop on a blade of grass and I can just really stop and watch it and see it and look at the reflection in that raindrop and notice the fragility of that piece of grass as it's moving'
(Meg)

Use of the senses formed the preparatory stage of the ‘Sit Spot’ (Appendix F, Young et al., 2010; Strich, 2012) practice. With the participant being aware of their senses as part of an initial ‘settling’. When combined with other meditation practices such as Sound meditation, Mindfulness of Breathing (MoB) or Kindly Awareness (KA) the sit spot was seen as providing the opportunity for observation, reflection and contemplation that allowed a real sense of place to permeate. It encouraged a form of embodied cognition that enabled participants to recognise the daily morass of thoughts and images, achieving a greater sense of personal space and wellbeing through slowing down, creating stillness and being part of the web of life which surrounds us. In doing so it helped the participants develop states of positive mindfulness through the focus on novel stimuli and their unfolding and connected experiences (Ritchie & Bryant, 2012).

The following comments illustrate the points made.

‘Much more appreciative of small natural, seasonal, weather, time of day type changes which is more enjoyable, more engaging, and there is a calmness about looking at a view in that way’ (Greta).

‘Sat in garden and noticed the veins on the ferns’ (Barbara)

‘Stopping to look is a really novel experience, I’m beginning to like it’ (April).

'I also find that in getting out I'm really engaging with my senses, whether it is being wind blown or smelling the sea' (Greta)

'It is of little use trying to change that which I regard as the primary condition.... I simply have to explore my experience today' (David)

'I think that you know that this idea of change, that's something about the natural world, when you are really able to look at it and see it everything is changing, there is constant change in the natural world' (Meg)

'you've got to be patient and just see what happens and that I think is a good counter balance to that instant gratification' (Crash)

8.3 Nature Based Mindfulness Approaches in practice

The combination of the 'sit spot', sense awareness and meditation practice into one activity proved to be the most referred to practice amongst all participants. It fully supports the concept of formal and informal practices (Crane et al., 2014) actually incorporating the two, establishing a definite time and place in which to practice meditation, usually mindfulness of breathing but also sound and other sensory practices, alongside awareness and engagement that encourage both breadth and focus. However other practices were also discussed positively (Table 28). These included mindful walking (and sauntering) something engaged in at some level by all participants ranging from David's slow walks along the canal to Crash's longer mountain running routes. Such activity is recognised as promoting decreases in rumination and subgenus prefrontal cortex activity (Bratman et al., 2015). Interestingly in terms of course design, other mindful movement practices rarely featured although some did yoga (April and Meg) and pilates (Maggie and Barbara), though these were taught in separate activity classes.

'I made the effort and walked along the canal to watch the swans again' (David)

'Moved my sit spot from canal foot, with the big view and swans, to the side of the basin, which I can reach easily but still see along the canal' (David)

'Walking is good for my health and keeping a journal encouraged reflection and increased the appreciation of my trips' (Greta)

Reflecting on the impact of their mindfulness practice on their daily lives participants commented:

'Physically I'm much less tense and much more relaxed, if I didn't do it and went straight home I'd still be carrying all the day with me into home' (April).

'mindfulness helps my nature practice' and *'there is a depth of practice that's really valuable'* (Meg)

'It doesn't matter to me now where people say CFS comes from, I simply have to explore my experience today' and *'coming back to my breath is particularly soothing and helps me relax to the extent that I can choose (what to do next)'* (David).

While thinking about how practices taught have affected the overall self-management of their illnesses, participants commented:

'I've moved away from a lot of things that used to make me stressed because after being so ill I decided I had to do that, nobody was going to do it other than me' (Maggie).

'I'm now finding that as you suggested aerobic exercise itself promotes serotonin production, while sense awareness also addresses stimulation of the brain. My Nan knew this: 'I had a walk to take me out o' meself.' (David).

'My arthritis isn't going to go away so what I need to be doing is managing it in the best way that I know and some of that comes from looking at the whole mindfulness,

mediation, interaction with nature, and building that into my weekly programme' (Greta).

'I suppose the things that matter to you whether that's eating well or caring about the environment whatever I suppose that's all something that is moulded by that interest in mindfulness and connection with nature' (Crash).

One other issue to be considered here that affects the development of a holistic daily practice (Chapter 1) is the support of others. Two participants (Maggie and Barbara) referred to family worries about their participation, while two others (Greta and Meg) discussed positive family support. My research shows that it is important that participants speak freely about the practices to family and friends. One participant (Meg) even encouraged her husband to engage in mediation practices himself as he went through a stressful period because of retirement. Recent research (Mapes et al., 2016) shows that carers are often over protective and can influence the practices, especially when they believe the participant is engaging in an activity (e.g. walking alone in the countryside) which may have greater risk.

Table 28: Practices regularly used by participants (all were taught initially)

Practice Abbreviations: M.O.B mindfulness of Breathing meditation; K.A. Kindly Awareness meditation; M.M. Mindful Movement; M.W/S Mindful Walking or Sauntering; Q.G. Qi Gong / Tai Chi; M.O.A. Mindful Outdoor Activities; Art - includes sketching and photography; Journal - Journalling including blogs; Eng. - Engagement with others.

Use Abbreviations; ● = Daily; ◎ = every week; ⊙ = sporadic; ○ = not used post training

Practice	April	Barbara	Crash	David	Greta	Maggie	Meg	myself
Sense awareness	●	◎	●	◎	●	⊙	●	●
M.O.B	●	◎	⊙	⊙	◎	⊙	●	●
K.A	⊙	⊙	○	◎	◎	○	◎	◎
Sit spot	●	●	⊙	◎	●	⊙	●	●
M.M.	◎	◎	⊙	○	⊙	⊙	●	◎
M.W/S	◎	◎	●	◎	●	◎	●	●
Q.G	◎	◎	⊙	○	⊙	◎	◎	◎
M.O.A.	◎	○	◎	○	◎	○	⊙	◎
Art	⊙	◎	⊙	⊙	◎	○	●	◎
Journal	●	●	○	◎	◎	⊙	◎	◎
Eng.	◎	◎	⊙	○	◎	◎	◎	◎

8.4 Nature Based Mindfulness Approaches: Identifying the benefits

8.4.1 Individual self-efficacy

As can be seen from participant comments there are a wide range of benefits that result from their practice. These include (examples in brackets)

- Management of symptoms (7.3.1)
- Improved relaxation and reduced stress (7.7.1)
- Coping ability (7.6.1)
- Improved focus (7.4.2)
- Improved communication (7.5.3)

Overall participants reported greater awareness of themselves and others and a greater ability to maintain perspective in the face of adversity. Such improvements lead to improved overall resilience and wellbeing.

8.4.2 Community Engagement

As their self management improved most participants (due to deteriorating health David was unable to participate in many activities) in the programme demonstrated a desire to (re)engage with their community, often volunteering their own time (April, Barbara, Crash, Greta, Maggie) or where this was difficult through financial or other contribution e.g. providing a room to meet in their house (David). Some also helped with specific activities related to nature (Table 29).

Table 29 Engaging with communities examples of engagement with organisations including those involved in nature and environmental protection		
Name	Nature based activity	Community based activity
April	RSPB	ACF, National Youth Organisation
Barbara		XEED, Self-Management UK
Crash	RSPB	Independent Custody Visiting Association, Coastguard
David		Triratna Buddhist Order
Greta	Cumbria Wildlife Trust, Morecambe Bay Partnership	Incredible Edible (also nature based) Ulverston in Bloom Ford Park Community Group
Maggie	Local garden project	Emmaus Homeless Charity Housing Association Community Radio
Meg	RSPB,	Manchester Buddhist Centre
Self	RSPB, John Muir Trust, Outdoor Therapy SIG IOL, International Adventure Therapy Committee	Mountain Rescue, NHS Foundation Trust

While addressing all of the Five Ways to Wellbeing (p.36), these activities especially engaged with the ‘connect’, be ‘active’ and ‘give’ criteria. It is worth recognising that while these contribute to wellbeing, participant’s self-management had to be successful enough to enable them to contribute in this way, something aided by their practice.

8.4.2 Health and Social Care

Clearly the major resource needed for a successful programme is time. That of the participant and programme facilitator / teacher. Other costs would include suitable venue, refreshments and programme materials. A programme is therefore very simple to establish and run. It is low cost and can be repeated. It enables participants to engage more fully with life despite their conditions and as such has major implications for health and social care provision and funding.

🕒 PERSONAL REFLECTION

Many have discussed that undertaking a PhD is the first stage, an apprenticeship, in a research career (Denscombe, 1998; Park, 2005; Murray, 2011; Cleary et al., 2015). I feel that this stage has done more than provide the opportunity to widen my understanding of research and of my field as a practitioner. It has helped me gain insight into the roles I don't want to undertake, such as those requiring less engagement with patients and participants, as well as roles I do want. Learning the intricacies of quantitative and qualitative approaches has also led to greater insight into the difficulties faced by both researchers, research participants and patients generally in adequately portraying the actual impact of an intervention in their daily lives (McQuoid et al 2015). However such difficulties aside it is important that the impact is more widely understood and that is part of the role of this study, to demonstrate the complexity of the individual's management of chronic conditions

8.5 Summary

This chapter has shown the themes raised through analysis of the participant's responses and examined how these reflect the aims (chapter 1, section 1.3.1) of the research study. In doing so areas ranging from frustrations with the perceptions of others (from family to HCPs) through to nature connectedness have all had an impact on the daily lives of participants, all contributing to managing their chronic conditions.

In the final chapter I will draw these and other issues together, identifying opportunities for further research and for development of nature based mindfulness practice.

Chapter 9 - Conclusion

Advances in medicine, diet and public health mean that life expectancy in the United Kingdom is increasing (Public Health England, 2015). This longevity will present major problems in terms of the funding and availability of health and social care in the future (Chapter 2). The need for greater responsibility on the part of individuals for their own wellbeing has already been recognised including in a 2016 campaign by the Government aimed at promoting adult health '*One You*'¹⁰. In addition, the growing physical and psychological separation of humans from nature is seen as a driver of the social, health and ecological challenges facing us in the future.

9.1 Background

This research represents a growing awareness of the disconnection experienced by those living with chronic conditions, a disconnection especially from the world of work, from community, and also from the wider world, animate and inanimate that we are part of. My interest was to determine whether the effectiveness of a mindfulness programme could be increased through the rekindling of an individual's connection with nature. Specifically, to determine whether such connection forms an effective avenue for improving the personal management of wellbeing through enhancing ways in which we think, see and act in the world. In doing so we meet Thompson's (1914) vision of nature ministering our minds and enriching our lives and Antonovsky's (1991) view of how we care for ourselves, supported by health professionals when needed.

¹⁰ More details at: <https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/about-one-you#9WQmmKckLBMiywJJ.97> accessed 22 March 2016

This study examined three key concepts: mindfulness, connectedness with nature (CWN), and condition self-management (CSM), identifying gaps not only in knowledge but specifically in implementation, especially within a population affected by chronic illness. Through using a Nature Based Mindfulness Approach (NBMA) the research distilled and integrated various perspectives, including Group Based Mindfulness Teaching, one to one coaching, aspects of ecotherapy and outdoor activities.

In constructing the research Bricolage to effectively examine the daily lives of participants it also combined elements such as motivational interviewing, so encouraging participants to identify and work towards their values and goals and enabling discussion and reflection on progress. This research shows that these techniques, while taking the traditional teaching of mindfulness eight week courses further along the therapeutic continuum, are readily absorbed into practice and do help overcome some difficulties in applying mindfulness to daily life. On the basis of this research, I argue that whilst the use of such techniques requires greater skill, time and commitment on behalf of the practitioner, this is ultimately of greater value to the client and demonstrates that a focus on nature does help programme participants positively integrate mindfulness into their daily lives (Chapter 1, section 1.3.1) so answering the research question.

9.2 Becoming Radical

My research builds on established MBSR and MBCT approaches by encouraging individuals to explore wider connections, especially in nature, and engage with such connections fully. It may be that some, focusing on the efficacy of these established programmes, could see this as a radical step and so it is worthwhile to reflect on the meaning of radical. The Oxford English Dictionary¹¹ suggests a number of meanings, including

- affecting the fundamental nature of something
- far reaching
- departure from tradition
- innovative
- getting to, or springing from, the roots of something

So accepting that new work should be novel and have some dissimilarity from prior and current methods, and be capable of being adopted and of influencing future directions, I believe the inclusion of specific nature connectedness elements into Mindfulness Based Approaches is a radical step. Rather than departing from tradition it springs from the Buddhist roots of mindfulness which emphasise connectedness. In this case seeing our connectedness to all things.

My research takes this step, bringing therapeutic, mindfulness and environmental practices together, bridging a gap between research that has been seen as reductionist and which has also failed to adequately address the needs of those with chronic illness. It is a step which could have far reaching consequences for individuals, health and wellbeing provision and therefore our society at large with decreasing health and

¹¹ (Proffitt et al., 2016)

care budgets serving an increasingly less healthy population. It is a step that can be adopted, that has the potential to make fundamental changes to our application of modern mindfulness practice and its integration into lifestyle improvements, developing our connectedness to the wider world. It is worth emphasising that any interconnectedness must start with an inner-connectedness, as mindfulness practices teach that to be kind to others we first must be kind to ourselves.

9.3 Answering the research question

My research question (Chapter 1.3.1) asked:

Does a focus on nature enable participants on a mindfulness programme to better assimilate mindfulness practice into their daily lives with resultant improvement in health and wellbeing, greater resilience and a more successful approach to self-management?

A focus on nature does help participants develop a more personal and effective mindfulness practice, one that is better tailored to their own circumstances, though with differences in practice. These are seen in Chapter 8 where the research also identified issues such as the need for ‘fertile ground’, the supportive conditions needed for practices to be effective and raised issues about ongoing medical care as a potential barrier.

9.3.1 The answer is in the detail

Addressing the assimilation of mindfulness practice into their daily lives most study participants had reported some previous difficulty engaging fully with mindfulness practices (especially meditation),

‘meditation seems a futile exercise in wilfulness’ (David, 8.3.1)

‘did some meditation and had a lot of pain’ (Barbara, A.5)

‘I was highly prejudiced’ (Meg, B.1)

'it felt dead weird at first' (April, B.2)

'I found this extraordinarily difficult to start with' (Greta, B.3)

'I just never really felt that I needed to do that' (Crash on engaging with his first programme (B.4))

'I didn't find easy at all.' (Maggie, C.4).

In this study, in addition to refreshing those meditation practices already learned (appendix E.1) participants were introduced to specific nature based mindfulness practices (Chapter 1.3.3) ranging from the *'sit spot'* through *'sense awareness'* to *'mindful sauntering'* and other engagement practices helping to incorporate mindfulness into daily activities (Fig.26 & table 33). My research shows the effects seen across a number of areas.

In meeting the study aims (chapter 1.3.1) individuals were encouraged to explore and engage with their natural environment, taking opportunities to become more regularly nurtured by nature, ranging from tending a garden to wilderness walks. This included becoming more aware of our place in, and connections to, the wider environment. Participants reported

'in my mind making connections with them' (David, A.1)

'I felt I had progressed in using mindfulness and engaging with the natural world around me' (Greta, A.2)

'I can achieve some kind of meditative place by focusing on nature' (April, B.2)

'there's a feeling of oneness, of peace, of freedom' (myself, A.3)

'it is beneficial' (Crash, B.4)

'meditation practice helps to heighten my awareness in day to day life and for me particularly in nature because that's something you know, that I love' (Meg, B.1).

However awareness of nature can also create difficulties

'I can't help but feel a sense of shock. It disturbs me. The river has always symbolised life and the journey through life. Now it has stopped it feels like it has died' (April, A.4)

'chemical stench of Glaxo Smith Kline takes the ascendancy' (David, A.1 causing him to walk only on days when the smell was least).

The programme also involved nurturing nature, ranging from growing activities to wider conservation projects. An element of this objective - developing a sense of protecting the natural world that contributes to our wellbeing, was not fully addressed, only Maggie, through tending her garden and Crash and Greta, both through the use of the John Muir Award, were involved in activities that could be seen as nurturing or protecting the environment. Greta became involved in beach cleans, Crash in a woodland project, both gaining their John Muir Award (Appendix G). It may be that future research could identify that for others the nurturing of our environment is a longer term development of their practice.

Other objectives (chapter 1, section 1.3.4) were met, including applying NBMA practices for the self-management of long term conditions.

'I'm pleased to write it has enabled me to break out of what has been a destructive thinking loop' (April, A.4)

'I don't expect to have my arthritis 'cured'. I now think that there are definitely things that I can do to make the situation more liveable with and maybe to improve it' (Greta, B.3)

'take it back round to nature, to me just gives me hope' (Maggie, C.4)

'nowadays many people just expect instant gratification for everything, when you're doing an activity like that (talking about managing his anxiety through outdoor activities) then you can't control what's happening and you've got to be patient and just see what happens and that I think is a good counter balance to that instant gratification' (Crash B.4)

This study has shown how mindfulness, awareness of self and others, in and of nature, helps to foster individual health and wellbeing, improving the self-management of conditions. It presents proven methods that will enhance the work of professionals in these areas, from mindfulness teachers to other allied health professionals. It has also shown that in meeting their own health needs, participants (Greta, Maggie, April, myself) engage with their communities often helping others to meet health needs (Chapter 10).

'contributing to the community, again something I think is important and helpful for my own wellbeing' (Greta, A.2.1.2).

'I'm now going back to my volunteering' (Maggie C.4).

A nature based mindfulness practice is not replacing the meditation cushion or shrine hall with a forest to provide a quiet place for contemplation. It is using our appreciation of our place in the world, our connection with the animate and inanimate to deepen our practice, to allow it to become truly embodied. This is an experience that through being comfortable in our body and mind allows us to engage fully with the wider world of which we are a part.

My research shows that moment by moment awareness of nature provides us with the novel experience we need to keep our practice fresh.

'It enriches it hugely' (Meg, B.1)

'I can achieve some kind of meditative place by focusing on nature' (April, B.2)

'nature... to me just gives me hope' (Maggie C.4)

'my connection with nature, the feeling as if I'm in a luxurious shower as I enter a forest' (myself, A.3)

Experiences developed through nature based mindfulness practices (table 18) and used in this study can be grouped in specific themes (fig. 17). These include the practices shown in table 30.

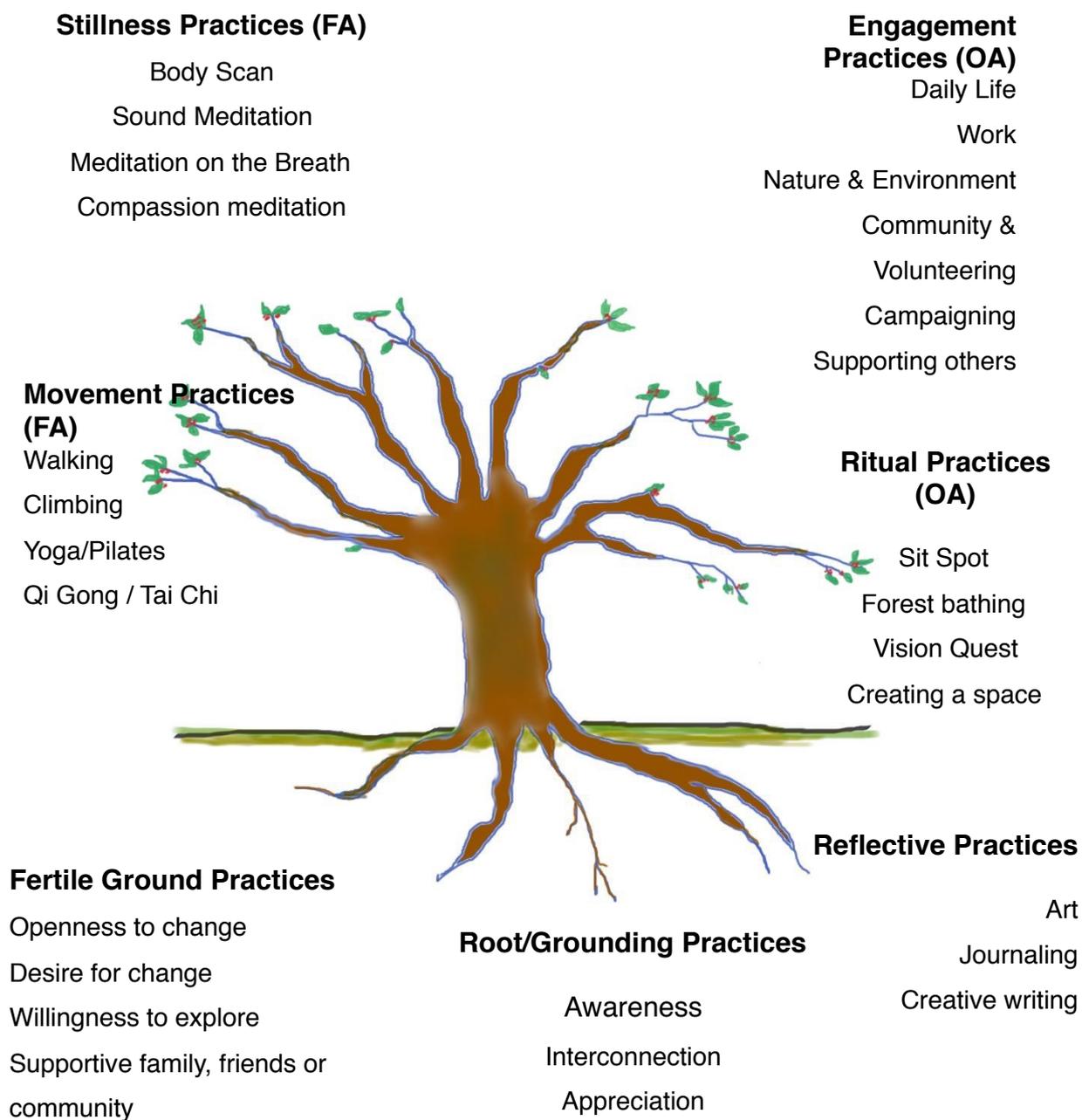


Fig. 17 Root and Branch Practice Themes

The Naturally Mindful Programme, cultivating mindfulness through developing fertile ground, root practices and focused attention (FA) and open awareness (OA) practices

Diagram - by the author

Table 30 - Nature Based Mindfulness practices themes

Detailed practice description available in the handbook given to participants (Johnson, 2013)

Practice	Description	Response examples
Stillness	Meditation found in other MBAs also including sound meditation which this research shows helps people to develop their awareness practice and when done prior to one of the other meditation practices helps deal with noise distraction.	<i>Coming back to my breath is particularly soothing</i> (David, A.1) <i>'Meditating felt like an oasis'</i> (Greta, C.1)
Movement	Nature based mindfulness movement includes meditative style movements such as Tai Chi and also encourages engagement with the senses but extends the focus and breadth through connection with the way we move e.g. mindful walking or sauntering	<i>'you look back and realise how far you've come. Which you can then think back and realise how far you've come in life'</i> (Maggie, C.4) <i>'with trail running.... I think it is a bit like moving meditation'</i> (Crash, B.4)
Ritual	In nature based mindfulness practice the sit spot (which can include elements of shinrin-yoku and vision quest) is a core practice which participants are asked to engage in everyday (sometimes more than once).	<i>'quite quickly I found that I could do it'</i> (April, A.3) <i>'I love to watch those raindrops'</i> (Meg, B.3)
Engagement	Participants were encouraged to examine their daily experience and look at ways to engage with the community and the environment	<i>By sitting regularly I've become familiar with other users of the canal'</i> (David, A. 1)
Reflection	Participants are encouraged to engage with their experience through images, poetry, journals etc.	Poems (April, Ch. 9; David, Ch. 9) Sketches (Barbara A.5; Crash C.5.1) Photographs (David, A.1; Greta, A.2; Maggie, C.5.5)
Fertile Ground	Nature based mindfulness programmes use motivational interviewing techniques throughout in order to help make links with health and other reasons for deepening practice.	<i>'I've made those decisions for other reasons about satisfaction and enjoyment and whatever'</i> (Greta, A.2)
Rooting	Developing awareness, appreciation and a connectedness to all around is the starting point for nature based practices hence the use of the SAI (Burns, 1998).	<i>'Being mindful I noticed more'</i> (Greta, A.2) <i>'very glad that I have stopped and actually 'seen' some of natural life in the park'</i> (April, A.3)

9.4 A few final words from the research study participants

This research has demonstrated how a Nature Based Mindfulness Approach can develop the ways in which, regardless of the issues faced by individuals in their daily lives, they are able to develop other ways of thinking, seeing, feeling, engaging and being in the world. In making real a (felt) connectedness which might otherwise remain abstract and elusive, a nature based mindfulness approach urges reflection on how this alternative reality can become the new ordinary. Mindfully connecting with nature may transform their approach to the self-management of their condition resulting in a life which is in the words of the participants, richer and more positive.

As my research shows, the answer is overwhelmingly positive with even those with the most active conditions in terms of ongoing medical intervention (Participants David, Barbara and Maggie) finding practices of benefit. As this research needed these and others to take part and contribute, to allow a glimpse into their lives, it is fitting that they contribute here. Here are some of the final reflections from interviews, journals and periods of discussion.

On being asked if nature connectedness practices and mindfulness were natural bedfellows, Meg herself an experienced mindfulness practitioner and teacher said

“Yes I think that most definitely, I think, actually I think my view is any mindfulness course would be hugely enriched using as much nature as there was available and that yes I’ve done workshops in hotels in the middle of Birmingham with natural materials.”

In finishing the interview I asked about how life is even with her health conditions,
Meg replied

“Rich”.

Greta was asked ‘In terms of your daily life, your use of a nature based approach to mindfulness, how’s life?’ she replied:

“Life is excellent, you know, I think that I can certainly think of people I know who have no chronic illness who are less positive about life because they are concerned about all kinds of issues and because they have no control, no ability to manage the situation they are in. I now have that ability.”

Barbara replied to the same question

“I have learnt lots on how to get more from life and learnt how to appreciate things more but at the same time taking care of myself”

Crash was asked how he felt about his daily practice of mindfulness and his connection to nature. He responded:

“It does effect the choices you make in terms of what you choose to do with your spare time and where you see yourself, the kind of jobs you apply for and I suppose the things that matter to you. Whether that’s eating well or caring about the environment, whatever, I suppose that’s all something that is moulded by that interest in mindfulness and connection with nature”.

April was asked if awareness of nature has helped develop her mindfulness practice.

She replied:

“Yes, I know we focus on breathing and people say the breath is always there and yes it’s always there, that’s fine but actually the natural environment is also always there even if you’re in a city it’s always there isn’t it? Because you can find it and, I only need to look out of the window if I need to or sit in the car or go in the garden and I can achieve some kind of meditative place by focusing on nature, yes definitely”

And asked how’s life?

“Life, I think it’s richer now, and I’m not so frightened if you like of just being by myself and I know what it is, I’ve got more options, I can manage my feelings better, I don’t need to retreat, it doesn’t matter. Before when I was anxious I would do everything to get rid of that feeling as quickly as I possibly could, but you get a better sense of freedom now because actually , I’m not brilliant at it but I know now that it’s OK just to be anxious, that’s OK, just be anxious it doesn’t particularly feel very nice, but actually it’s OK. I don’t have to try distract myself I don’t have to try and not be be lots of things It’s work in progress it’s I feel I’m still at the beginning of it, but it opens up more possibilities and natures always there isn’t it, always there, a bit like breathing and then as long as I can see and hear and feel, I’ve always got that to, to focus on”.

9.5 Recommendations for practitioners / teachers / therapists

The following recommendations are based on the findings of this research

- One size does not fit all - standard programmes may be suitable for specific groups e.g. depression but all programmes can be improved with more attention to individual circumstances.
- Mindfulness programmes should be discussed in detail with participants before commencement. This includes taking the opportunity to highlight the importance of family and other support to create the conditions for practice (fertile ground).
- The discussion should identify the participant's motivation for taking part.
- Nature based practices such as the 'Sit Spot' and 'Mindful Sauntering' should be included in all programmes. They are simple to teach and practice yet can improve the participant's ability to incorporate practice into daily life.
- Sense awareness practices are also simple to use and can improve the awareness of pleasurable sensations amidst a context of suffering.
- The use of tools such as the Compass Rose, enable ongoing discussion and improved commitment during and post programme.
- If participants are receiving ongoing acute medical care then this should be identified and discussed so as to limit barriers to successful participation.
- Regular follow up during and post programmes will help participants fully integrate mindfulness into their daily lives. This should be with the leader of the programme not simply a participant group gathering.

9.6 The Significant and Original Contribution to Knowledge

As this research has shown, much attention has been paid within academic literature to the individual fields of nature connectedness, mindfulness and the self management of chronic illness. This research has illustrated the gaps in understanding that result from viewing such fields in isolation. It has also demonstrated issues that occur when research is increasingly reductionist, for example studies into mindfulness practice which while amply illustrating positive effects on brain physiology, fail to provide insights into how such changes impact on the daily lives of programme participants. Similarly while much research into the benefits of nature connectedness highlights important issues affecting the young, little is available which examines the long term effects of a lack of nature connectedness on those with chronic health conditions or which recognises the importance to older adults of their childhood exposure to natural environments.

The original and significant contribution of this thesis results from the research study itself, taking the significant step to develop, deliver and evaluate an original nature based mindfulness programme for the self management of chronic conditions. This research bridged the individual fields discussed, brought them together and applied core elements of each in identifying and working with a group of adults with a diverse range of chronic conditions. In doing so it contributes to the teaching of mindfulness, providing new ways of engaging participants and a route to

the improved integration of mindfulness into everyday life. It also provides insights into the difficulties faced by those learning mindfulness. So, this research provides significant and original contributions to knowledge by

- demonstrating how introducing specific one-to-one elements of a mindfulness programme aids motivation, retention, communication and ultimately success.
- demonstrating improvements in participant self efficacy as part of the self management element of a mindfulness programme which incorporates elements that develop nature connectedness. Such nature based elements help participants incorporate mindfulness practices into their daily lives. They can also be included in other interventions such as occupational therapy.
- identifying barriers to programme success that could be found and addressed across a range of self management interventions.

These including areas such as

- the lack of family understanding and support
- the desire for ongoing active medical interventions to provide a positive outcome without requiring a change in lifestyle e.g. a belief that a cure is imminent
- The resistance to change which emanates from a desire to maintain a 'normal' life

These are barriers which this research shows can be overcome by additional communication elements in a mindfulness programme

Through making this contribution to knowledge the research benefits mindfulness teachers and their participants. With improved self efficacy it will contribute to the self-management of chronic illnesses and, in doing so it builds resilience and personal responsibility for health and wellbeing, a truly salutogenic approach.

9.7 Suggestions for future research

My research shows the value of suitable criteria for research participants, so that specific variables (Chapter 1.3.2) (e.g., education level, illness or condition, degree of current medical intervention, family at home, community involvement, etc.) can be better identified, screened and controlled. My research identified criteria for participants (Chapter 8). It became apparent that those facing the challenge of ongoing medical interventions (Barbara, Maggie, David) had difficulty in fully assimilating practices into their daily lives. I feel future research could examine whether self-management based approaches such as mindfulness are more effective once active medical intervention has either finished or it is recognised that there is little future intervention of benefit. In a similar vein whether family members need to have an understanding of the approach including the benefit of family support (Greta, myself, Meg) as my research has also shown that family members / carers can be over protective (Maggie and Barbara).

My research demonstrated the success of all participants to use some of the techniques taught (chapter 1, section 1.3.4). A longitudinal study over a number of years would identify the ability of participants to maintain levels of practice, especially as their physical conditions may actually be deteriorating (e.g. David and Maggie).

There is much research taking place into MBSR / MBCT. Comparison between these groups and one undertaking a Nature Based Mindfulness Approach would help others,

especially teachers identify techniques that are beneficial between the two methods. If the groups had similar medical or psychological conditions then a control group that didn't practice mindfulness of any sort (i.e. Treatment as Usual) could also be included to compare and contrast changes in the self-management of their conditions.

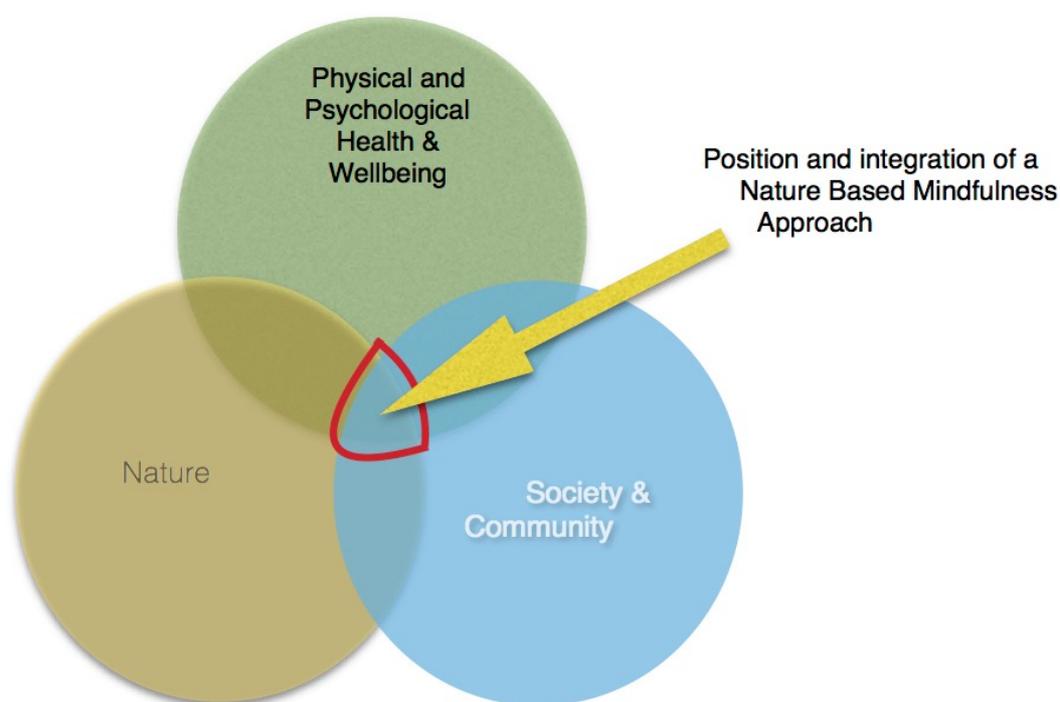
New research could identify the impact of nature based mindfulness practices in all aspects of Five Steps to Wellbeing programmes (Chapter 2, 2.3), expanding studies to include those facing general life issues such as problems with family, work and leisure.

My research shows that for all participants a clear link with nature started in childhood. At present no studies have been identified examining the impact a nature connection from childhood has on adult health, especially chronic illnesses. and the suggestion is that more investigation is needed into the links between these areas over time.

9.8 Taking the research forward

Looking to the future, Nature Based Mindfulness Approaches can be integrated across a range of areas (Fig. 18) and will be more effective when this is the case.

Figure 18 Integration of Practices



Building on Fisher's work (2013) in Ecopsychology I believe a nature based approach to mindfulness can go beyond the integration of individual approaches and lead to an individual whose health, wellbeing and resilience combines a connection with nature, involvement in the community and a responsibility for the self-management of health and wellbeing

An example of such integration resulting from a presentation of this research study, was a request from the Cumbria Reducing Offending Partnership Trust to develop a programme for veterans who were facing problems. The resulting programme

‘Respected, Naturally’ received funding and commenced in April 2015. It has already had positive feedback including the following from a participant:

“I suffer from P.T.S.D which has resulted in several suicide attempts between November and December 2014. This has resulted in court appearances and five admissions to NHS mental health units. I also a had a mini stroke or TIA (Transient Ischaemic Attack) during this period. The programme has shown me that there is a path better than my suicidal behaviour, and has shown me lots of techniques to deal with flashbacks and nightmares, and helped me develop different interests in the natural environment to help me cope” (Roy).

Another participant wrote to the funders with a message that included:

“I've lost the ability to function in the world through long-term illness and acute anxiety, yet, through the work that Steve is doing with me... I've started to feel that I can take responsibility for myself again.... I can take this experience and confidence back into my "every day life" so I can become a functioning part of the community again. You may ask, why can't I do this normally, well it's because with acute anxiety and being on high alert all the time, I simply get worse in busy environments. Being out in a "natural" environment calms my state down and you become connected again with your surroundings. The confidence gained from this is starting to spread into my daily life i.e. being to cope with people, problems etc. (Carol)

9.9 Summary

Mindfulness is already recognised as an effective intervention for conditions such as relapse in depression and for pain management. In constructing the Bricolage it has been possible to identify and understand the meaning given by participants to managing illness in a particular way and its impact on daily life. Recognising the approach differs from many of the papers cited this is important, it complements other studies by delving deeper into the impact of interventions.

This research shows how cultivating a nature based mindfulness approach provides and develops practices which awaken a deeper appreciation, care, respect for, and empathy with nature as part of realising a true mutual systems based approach to living. For managing wellbeing, especially for those with chronic illnesses, including an increasingly elderly population, key contributions may be in building and strengthening resilience, developing connections and encouraging community involvement. Such contributions are cost effective, simple to establish and provide benefits to individuals and society at large.

Being mindful, in and of nature, the wider world we are part of, means engaging fully with people, flora, fauna, our landscapes, including the impact of people on them.

This research shows that engagement using focused attention e.g. Mindfulness of Breathing and open awareness practices, especially engaging with the senses, encourages the appreciation of stimuli and awareness of experience felt to be

important in the development of positive states of mind through mindfulness. My research shows this may help the continuation of practice as a regular part of a person's daily life thereby assisting in the maintenance of changes in brain morphology which are beneficial and persistent over time.

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Salutogenesis in Action: a nature based 'mindfulness for health and wellbeing' programme and its impact on daily life

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Volume 3

Appendices

Appendices

The following appendices provide the background material for this study, ranging from journal entries, interview transcripts and images to the study participant workbook and ethical clearance and participation forms.

Table 31 - Index of Appendices	
Appendix	Description
A	Publications, Presentations and Posters
B	Extracts from personal journals
C	Interview transcripts - transcripts of video interviews
D	Reflection, Discussion and Images produced by participants
E1	Standard Mindfulness for Health Course Content
E2	Good practice guidelines for mindfulness teachers
F	John Muir Award
G1	Sample Pilot Study Questionnaires
G2	Compass Rose Assessment Tool
H	Study administrative elements - Participant Informations sheets, consent forms and ethical approval

Appendix A - presentations, publications and posters

A.1 Presentations

Introducing Healthcare Chaplaincy. Network of Buddhist Organisations AGM, London, 28 October 2017.

Mindfulness: Is it Buddhism Lite? Healthcare Chaplaincy Annual General Meeting, Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham, 8 July 2017.

Mindfulness and Chronic Illness. British Pain Society Annual Meeting; 26 June 2017

Mindfulness and Wordsworth. The Wordsworth Trust, Grasmere, 29 April 2017

The Body Scan: an embodied mindfulness practice for chronic pain.
Mindfulness and Cancer Care in the NHS, 26 March 2015

Mindfulness Based Outdoor (Adventure) Therapy: Institute of Outdoor Learning Annual Conference, Loughborough University, October 2014

Naturally Mindful: restorative power of nature, stillness and awareness for children, families and supporters: 2nd Children, Young People and Family's Wellbeing Research Conference, University of Cumbria and Brathay Trust, June 2014

Naturally Mindful, working with vulnerable groups. Mindfulness in Forests and Woodlands Conference. Mersey Forest, Warrington, September 2013

Being in Nature: Enhancing and deepening connections with nature for young people with health physical and mental health issues, European Experiential and Outdoor Education Conference, Stockholm, June 2013

Being in Nature: Enhancing and deepening connections with nature for people in recovery or with long term conditions: Adventure Conference, Skye, April 2013

Naturally Mindful: Mindfulness Based Approaches in Adventure, deepening your practice. Institute of Outdoor Learning National Conference, Stoke, November 2012

Mindfulness Based Approaches in Adventure Therapy, 6th International Adventure Therapy Conference, Hrubá Skála, Czech Republic October 2012

Mindfulness of Nature, deepening your practice: Local Authority Outdoor Educator Training, North Wales, February 2012

Mindfulness and ME: Association for Young People with ME, Annual Conference, Milton Keynes, June 2008

Keynote Presentation, *Community Development and Corporate Responsibility*, 3rd Global Change Conference, Manchester Metropolitan University, June 2001

A.2 Publications

Johnson, S. (2016) 'Trauma Risk Management'. *Mountain Rescue: Official journal for Mountain and Cave Rescue in England and Wales*. No. 55, p. 49, MREW, Manchester.

Johnson, S. (2015) 'Naturally Mindful: Using Mindfulness-based Approaches in Adventure Therapy - A Deeper More Sustainable Approach'. In Norton, CL., Carpenter, C. & Pryor, A. (Eds.) *Adventure therapy around the globe, International Perspectives and Diverse Approaches*. Champaign, Illinois, Common Ground Publishing.

Johnson, S. (2013) Being in nature: enhancing and deepening connections with nature for people in recovery or with long term conditions. In Varley, P. & Taylor, S. (Eds) *Being There: slow, fast, traditional, wild, urban, natural*; Centre for recreation and Tourism Research

Johnson, S. (2012) 'Strange things happen in the middle of the night: maintaining critical skills in mountain rescue teams', *Mountain Rescue: Official journal for Mountain and Cave Rescue in England and Wales*. MREW, Manchester

Johnson, S. (2010) 'EMT Training', *Mountain Rescue: Official journal for Mountain and Cave Rescue in England and Wales*, MREW, Manchester

Johnson, S. (2009) *Mindfulness approaches to health and wellbeing: patients and practice benefits: The evidence of success*. Evaluation report for Breathworks C.I.C. Manchester.

Johnson, S. (2000) 'Community Participation and Needs Assessment'; in Elliot, G (2000) *Beyond De-mining: Capacity Building and Socio-Economic Consequences*. Johannesburg, SAIIS.

Johnson, S (1999) *From Partnership to Leadership: a study of the Bad Honnef Framework for rehabilitation and reintegration of communities affected by conflict*. New York, UNOPS.

Johnson, S. (1998) *Environmental Action Guide: an implementation tool for small businesses*. Business Link Bedfordshire for the Department of Trade and Industry, London

A.3 Poster presentations

Mindfulness Based Adventure: An alternative to traditional therapy for a young woman with recurrent depression. European Experiential and Outdoor Education Conference, Stockholm, June 2013

Naturally Mindful: project outcomes of Mindfulness Based Adventure Therapy programme for young men. Mindfulness in Society, International Scientific Meeting, Chester, March 2013.

Run Faster, Climb Higher: Mindfulness Based Outdoor Therapy, an alternative to the therapist's chair. 6th International Adventure Therapy Conference, Czech Republic. September 2012.(also presented at the UoC Research Colloquium July 2012).

Appendix B - Extracts from personal journals

These extracts have been edited to exclude information that may breach the anonymity of participants and may have been abridged to avoid material irrelevant to the study e.g. the products purchased at a local garden centre. The images included are not listed in the list of figures as they are provided by the participants to illustrate their own journals rather than to inform the study.

B.1 Extracts from David's Journal

20 March 2014



Hoad Hill from the canal path

I sometimes think about moving, but this is a nice enough place to die. My friend said it was good to see I was looking on the bright side! My response - May as well plan for the pipe and slipper years. The alzheimer and diaper years will be someone else's problem! I had a lovely walk, shame that the big trimmers were out, hacking down all the bracken and briar, bramble and hawthorn. I'm rather fond of its scruffiness. It'll grow back soon enough though!

22 March 2014

Another toddle down the tow path. Lit through thunder clouds the canal was slate. An ashen bough broke the water. On it a cormorant drying its unhurried wings. Grey on grey on grey.

23 March 2014

By sitting regularly I've become familiar with other users of the canal, in my mind making connections with them, even bizarrely at my age, giving them names. Here is a picture of Colin the cormorant back on his perch



Colin the Cormorant

28 April 2014

Today I'm reminded of all I learned on the mindfulness course, especially learning to distinguish between primary and secondary suffering and how it is of little use trying to change that which I regard as the primary condition. It doesn't matter to me now where people say CFS comes from, I simply have to explore my experience today.

Because of increasing stomach problems I'm finding that coming back to my breath is particularly soothing and helps me relax to the extent that I can choose whether to go

for a walk or back to bed, rather than sitting stiffly in frustration. It works for me. I have loaded the guided 3 minute breathing space and short body scan meditations onto my mobile so they are accessible.

14 May 2014



big sky and swans

The rich spicy scent of May blossom transports one along two thirds of the tow path, until alas the whine and hum and chemical stench of Glaxo Smith Kline takes the ascendency. But then the estuary opens into big skies and swans.

19 May 2014

Today I'm moved by some fine words from a colleague:

"It is not about doctrines or beliefs for me. It is about the existential nature of our living connections and the certain knowledge of our deaths. The certain and sure knowledge of the Four Sights which so astonished Gautama. Astounding, to grow old and ill and to die. Astonishing to live at all. I will have my freedom. I advise you to have yours."

So I made the effort and walked along the canal to watch the swans again.

25 May 2014

Time for another toddle down the tow path. Not only will it cheer me up, it may help me to remember that it did..... I found the following reference that reflected your teaching:

"Taken together, these results suggest that exercise and the antidepressant drug fluoxetine may share a common underlying antidepressant mechanism, and in particular, that this mechanism may be mediated through the stimulation of hippocampal neurogenesis."

(Huang et al 2012)

Sorry but this isn't the complete reference, but thought you'd be interested anyway.

I should add that I abandoned SSRIs (selective serotonin re-uptake inhibitors) after a brief flirtation some years ago. I'm now finding that as you suggested aerobic exercise itself promotes serotonin production, while sense awareness also addresses stimulation of the brain. My Nan knew this: 'I had a walk to take me out o' meself.'

26 May 2014



waterlilies, swans and quatermass

Somedays the sight and smell of the Glaxo plant make me think of tv and films of my childhood, that some monster will emerge from the canal.

2 June 2014

Although the following may be a longer poem than expected as a journal entry I do find this is a good nightcap. Helps to keep me authentic when I drift into forgetting.

I work all day, and get half-drunk at night.
Waking at four to soundless dark, I stare.
In time the curtain-edges will grow light.
Till then I see what's really always there:
Unresting death, a whole day nearer now,
Making all thought impossible but how
And where and when I shall myself die.
Arid interrogation: yet the dread
Of dying, and being dead,
Flashes afresh to hold and horrify.

Philip Larkin, "Aubade" from Collected Poems. (Farrar Straus and Giroux, 2001)

(although David included all verses of this poem, for brevity only one is shown here)

12 June 2014

Pain increasing, more tests to come. Have moved my sit spot from canal foot, with the big view and swans, to the side of the basin, which I can reach easily but still see along the canal towards Glaxo. I'm constantly amazed how many families of swans nest along the bank and how often there seems to be another family group of teenage swans, not such ugly ducklings but soon to be majestic in flight. Yet while the young swim a mature bird has obviously broken its neck on overhead power lines and lies floating in the weed, another example of life goes on.

Authors Note

As the pain continued David underwent further tests including until one day it was revealed he had a large inoperable tumour in his intestines. David was determined that this should not affect his son's 'A Level' progress (his son had moved to live with him some two years earlier on entering 6th Form). He kept the detail of the illness a secret from most people until in September with his son satisfactorily settled at University he agreed to further tests. He started Chemotherapy and waited.

11 November 2014

Got the results today of the halfway mark scan. It shows no change, which means that although the tumour has not shrunk, the chemo appears to have retarded its progress.

'Stable' is the jargon.



Looking along the canal from the sit spot

The Oncologist said there is no material benefit for now in taking any more poison. Or more precisely, retrospective studies indicate that continuation in these cases is rewarded on average by an extension of one week in life expectancy. So, the treatment has been stopped and I will have a scan every 8 weeks. When it resumes growth I will be offered further chemo. I have to say I am really, really, really glad to stop the chemo, at least for a while. It's not nice.

12 December 2014

Next Tuesday I will undergo a coeliac plexus nerve block. Success is commonplace and will provide many months dramatic reduction in pain. A good option, since my current Morphine intake would stun a horse and keeps me in a most unsatisfactory state of dull bewilderment, so mindfulness practices have no effect, though if pain can be reduced I will at least enjoy the view.

1 January 2015

I believe that after more than 30 years I am probably very much more Stoic than Buddhist. Right now feels like 99% to 1%. Seems to have all the good bits from Buddhism without the strangulated rebirth mystical stuff. Otherwise a sound experiential philosophy of life. Stoics a bit thin on shared expression of emotional engagement, but otherwise spot on, especially their views on living in agreement with nature and that to do so is to live a life of virtue.

David died on the 9 January 2015

B.2 Greta's journal - a reflection on integration

B.2.1 Overview

Having met with Steve a number of times to be interviewed and having undertaken the range of nature activities within the mindfulness programme I felt I had progressed in using mindfulness and engaging with the natural world around me. I believe this is contributing to an improvement in my health and so I wanted to take this practice and engagement deeper, building stronger connections with the world around me and contributing to protecting it. Following discussion I decided to undertake the John Muir Award with support from Steve to help ensure I was being



Meditating at the side of High Dam, Cumbria; one of my many 'sit spots'.

mindful about the activity rather than falling into the state of doing rather than being.

The John Muir Award (appendix F) is an environmentally based award scheme that

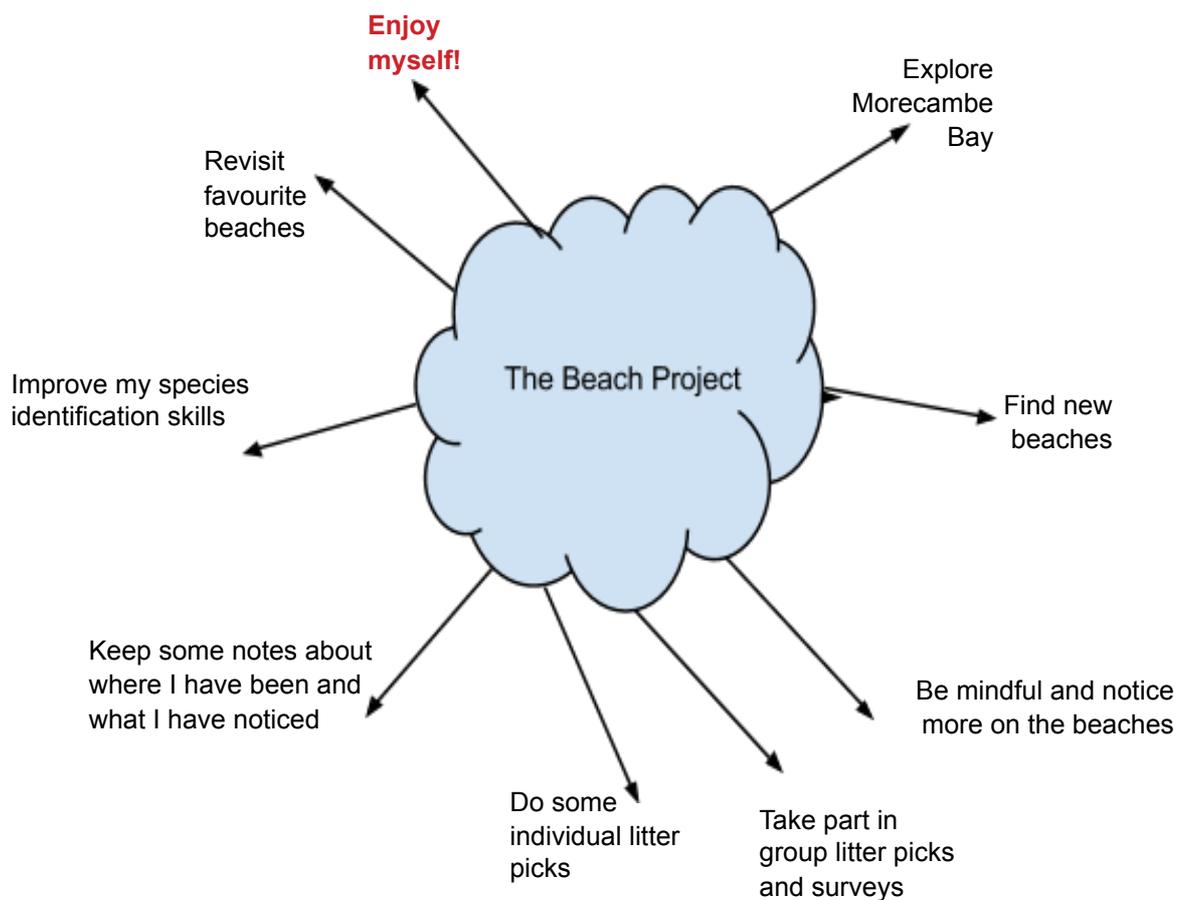
encourages participants to connect with, enjoy and care for places in a way that is both structured and focused on their needs. The Award aims to challenge each participant to develop an understanding of, and responsibility for, a chosen wild place or places, though the emphasis is on natural rather than wild. How the scheme is structured means that it can offer an opportunity to explore values and spirituality, so closely linking with the work I'd been doing on incorporating nature based mindfulness practice into my daily life as part of the research. I wanted to see how I felt by developing my own project and reporting back.

The four headings for the John Muir Award are:

- Discover
- Explore
- Conserve
- Share.

So my reflection uses these headings.

I planned to explore the coast and beaches of Morecambe Bay and the Duddon Estuary by walking and bird/nature watching through the autumn, winter and spring and take part in organised environmental activities with family and friends.



My path to being well through engaging with nature, specifically the beach environments I love. In practicing mindfulness I'm connecting with these places and understanding their impact on me and my impact on them. Along the way I am completing a John Muir Award!

B.2.1.1 Discover a Wild Place

I took a fresh look at Morecambe Bay (which is very near to where I live) through ordnance survey maps, guides to walking and birdwatching in the Bay and the web site: <http://www.morecambebay.org.uk>

(Note: In Greta's journal there now follows a detailed description of the bay)



Walking near Morecambe Bay's Piel Bar at the Southern tip of Walney Island

B.2.1.2 Explore a Wild Place

I visited many beaches..... (names deleted). Some of this was simply to sit and one of my many sit spots has a view of the estuary. I recognise (partly from feedback) that this sounds very active and busy but while I do appreciate the sense of openness,



Sand dunes at Roanhead beach, part of the National Trust reserve

space and solitude I can have on a beach, I also really enjoy visiting new places and talking to people. I also think working with different groups is about contributing to the community, again something I think is important and helpful for my own wellbeing.

I enjoyed visiting new beaches and revisiting familiar ones with a more focused approach. By 'being mindful' I noticed more and got more from a walk by trying to identify plants, trees, birds, sealife and butterflies. Walking is good for my health and keeping a journal encouraged reflection and increased the appreciation of my trips.

I get a great sense of satisfaction from seeing and identifying new species or as with seagulls watching their behaviour. This isn't really in terms of 'collecting', analysing or ticking them off in some way. I've noticed that when I successfully see something

new or familiar, I give myself a 'well done' for making the effort to get out, to look and to appreciate. I also find that in getting out I'm really engaging with my senses, whether it is being wind blown or smelling the sea.

B.2.1.4 Conserve a Wild Place

A memorable litter pick was at Humphrey Head where eight of us completed a formal survey of a 100 metre section marked out by the leader from the Field Studies Council. The whole area looked more like a salt marsh than a beach and was very muddy and slippery along the channels where the sea comes in. Armed with a range of books and identification sheets and with the input of staff from the Cumbria Wildlife Trust we identified everything in eleven transects - very enjoyable and an opportunity to learn as well as knowing it is feeding into a large project.

I have enjoyed meeting other people on the beach clean and survey days and feel I have got more from my beach trips due to the mindful approach I have taken. I think that the exercise, awareness, reflection and journal keeping that working on the John Muir Award has involved have been good for my health and enhanced the experience of my beach visits.

B.2.1.5 Sharing my experiences

The core part of my sharing experiences has been to discuss them formally and informally with friends, colleagues and volunteers where I work, encouraging them to undertake similar activities and to take part in the John Muir Award themselves. This



Seal watching opposite Piel Island

has included facilitating and guiding trips for others to undertake activities such as beach cleans on Walney Island.

I have found having the John Muir Award as a focus to my getting out and engaging with nature really useful. It helped me to ensure I did go out rather than think I had too much to do with work or other activities. At each location I found it simple to think about the mindfulness activities I've been taught and apply them, whether it was simply the sit spot, of which I now have many, or whether it was sense awareness or mindful walking. All needed me to make the effort and get out.

B.3 Steve's Journal (extract)

This section is include to illustrate undertaking the same activities as participants. The full journal was adapted to a blog, highlighting lessons learned and shared online at <http://naturallymindful.blogspot.com>.

Thursday 19 September 2013

As Autumn makes its blustery presence felt I think either it's time to 'batten down the hatches', retreating into the home, turning the heating up and thinking of sustaining food, stews, puddings and the like; or remembering that we don't hibernate and start thinking of how to get the most from the conditions. Changing the coats hanging in the hallway from lightweight to heavy duty waterproofs, add warm layers, hats and gloves. Putting bird feeders out so that the birds learn where to feed before the winter sets in.



Feeding wild birds
a great opportunity for moments of delight

21 July - 2 Aug 2013

This last two weeks has been a journey of discovery. I've been at Schumacher College where the warmth expressed by everyone, students, volunteers, teachers and staff creates an atmosphere of openness, caring and passion. That the teachers, such as Satish Kumar, Stephan Harding, Andy Fisher, Helena Norberg-Hodge are of such



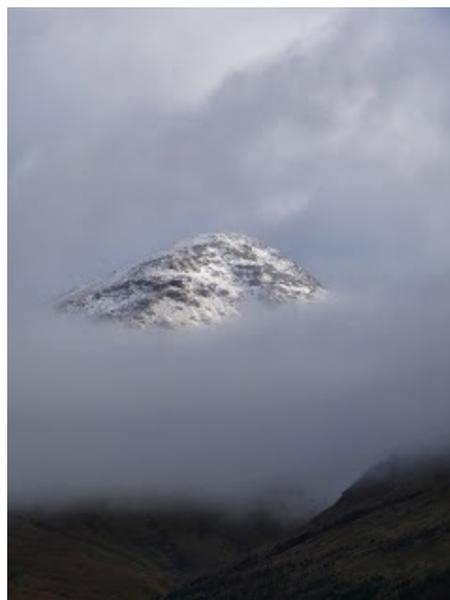
working with renowned ecologist Stephan Harding

quality, sharing their knowledge and their values simply enhances the experience.

Community is a strange thing, you can bring people together but it doesn't create a community. Those coming together need to share and perhaps more importantly need to give. Shared values seem obvious for a community, but I'm wondering about living in communities where there are no shared values? Such as at home. Maybe it isn't that values aren't shared but that they're not explicit. If I don't know the neighbours let alone share with, help and support them, what am I doing to be in a community?

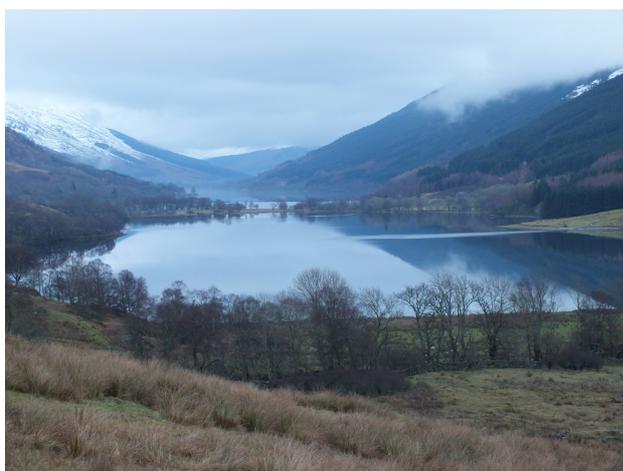
Sunday 24 November 2013

Driving home after a week walking and kayaking in Scotland we came over a hill and in front of us was a view of Dumbarton, the Erskine Bridge and in the distance, the City of Glasgow. My partner commented "back to the real world". I experienced an instant sense of rejection. "No, that isn't the real world, the real world is what we're leaving behind". After all, we'd spent a week where our activities were governed by the weather, the wind and rain, the cold, the tides and available daylight. A week where we'd had no internet connection, no mobile or other telephone connection. In the week we'd been walking and seen a sea otter feeding, spotted a beaver dam, watched a red squirrel leap from branch to branch. From our kayaks we'd gazed at terrific views of mountains, lochs and the sea. We'd been able to slowly approach bird colonies and enjoy their intrigue of us, their watching carefully to see if we were predators. We'd sourced local food and visited places recording communities with over 5000 years of connection to the land around us. Isn't this the real world?



A week on retreat 14 - 21 February 2014

I've decided it would be good to go deeper. To spend a week having time to really practice mindfulness, meditation and connecting with nature. So I've booked a cabin near a Buddhist retreat centre in the Scottish Highlands. The centre provides food and ensures there is water, though power supplies are limited and there is no mobile phone or internet coverage, so sounds ideal at the moment.



Just after arriving the forecast snow started to come down the valley. I was invited to the food store to select fresh food. This was an interesting mindfulness practice.

Initially it felt a bit like a child lost in a toy shop. Not knowing what was where. Then there was a quick 'rush', some of this, some of that, oh yes and some bananas. Then a feeling of dread, being judgemental, my god, look at how much is in the bag! Am I really going to eat all that in a week, especially as this is just the fresh food? The dried foodstuffs such as rice and pasta were already at the cabin. Then the guilt started. Will they think I'm a pig when they see how much is in the bag? Should I eat less? But then rational thought started. Five fruit and veg a day = 35 pieces of fruit and veg. I've actually got less than that, phew! I've now unpacked and am simply sitting with a hot chocolate and writing, feels indulgent.



Started day as in my head I'm 'supposed' to do, sitting formally in meditation. It was quite nice to do this though, even ringing a bell to start was a way of settling. Is this conditioning or a much needed 'switch' trying to give the brain a clear message?

Walking, a flash of red on the verge and what looked like a well fed, large red fox appeared, trotted along the road for a while then crossed a field into the forest.

Brilliant, what a start to my week! It's funny how I find seeing wild animals so uplifting, it's as if they are a reminder that life isn't so complicated, it just goes on, and that simple things can affect my mood.



Tuesday – another disturbed night’s sleep but I wake to knocking at the door. I pull the curtain back to find a red squirrel scratching for more seeds. Again an instant joyous mood lifter as I get the seeds and camera out. I enjoy half an hour of its antics.

This is been a great week, lots of space not just around me but inside my head as well. I’m very aware how much the scenery, the wildlife and simply the chance to slow down have had on me. I really need to practice what I preach. To enjoy my connection with nature, the feeling as if I’m in a luxurious shower as I enter a forest, the joy of seeing another creature along my path or even deep in the woods. There’s a feeling of oneness, of peace, of freedom.

Thursday 21 March 2014



A frozen bubble of air under sea ice on the local beach (temp -4C)

So walking on the beach after a frost, I was aware of the ice under my feet, where the tide was, other people and what I could see, feel, in fact what all my senses were telling me. But seeing this bubble of air, captured in time triggered a whole range of responses. How amazing it looked, how was it formed, even being pleased I had my camera to capture it. To me this is the difference between mindfulness and awareness.

SATURDAY, 12 JULY 2014

I've been working with a group of children for the last few weeks and it has been great. They are receptive, keen to learn, to explore, to understand our connection to the world around us.



On the butterfly mound at Ford Park, Ulverston

I was doing this work as part of a project involving children from local schools and older adults who can share their knowledge. It's not been a one way transfer as we've all learned from each other.

Sunday 25 January 2015

The last few months have contained a very different exploration experience, accompanying a participant and friend through his diagnosis of cancer in July, treatment, slow and debilitating increase in pain and finally (December) sudden and rapid deterioration including admission to the local hospice for the last few days (January). Leading the memorial service was a particular challenge, wanting it to reflect his Buddhist values and personal wishes and at the same time being open to all friends, family and colleagues.

Watching my friend after his own diagnosis he moved on to include more awareness and activity in and around nature as he prepared himself for the inevitable. He made changes at home to prepare for stages that would be difficult not only in terms of his ability to cope but to prepare things for his son taking over. Together we reflected on his achievements, on his experiences and talked about a growing sense of completion, that his life was what it was, nothing left to do or to prove, acceptance of what was to come. He became truly 'in the moment', savouring each experience without judgement, it was simply what it was.

B.4 April's Journal

Tuesday 1st April 5.15 pm.

I am sitting on a chair in my back garden enjoying the late afternoon sun. Barney my dog is sitting at my foot. When the traffic stops I can hear the hum of nearby bumblebee. I can see several bees flying around the heather which is fully in flower. I can hear birds singing all around me and I feel the warmth of the sun.

(journal here contains description of the local area)

I like the way the sun is falling on an evergreen tree at the end of the drive; it lights it up and makes it stand out. The sun feels really warm on my leg - quite surprising. As I sit here I see the shadows of the fence posts are getting longer. I'm quite surprised at how noisy it is out here even when the traffic stops.

It has been lovely to sit out here in the sun. It's it's not something I would usually do as so it feels a bit odd at the moment and I don't feel particularly different for having done this. I can't quite believe the dog has been so settled while I have been sitting here; perhaps I'm giving off a relaxed vibe that he appreciates.

Thursday 3rd April 3.15 pm.

I am sitting in my car in Rylands Park. It is a grey overcast sky today with a slight haze in the air. I can see the grass is beginning to grow as it is bright green and getting long. There is a big patch of yellow daffodils in the foreground. I can hear seagulls overhead, although I can't see them. When the traffic stops I can hear birdsong in the trees behind me.

As I am supposed to be working I'll finish my "sitting" but I feel very glad that I have stopped and actually "seen" some of natural life in the park. This is in stark contrast to how I usually look at the park that is I look but I'm not sure I really see it.

Friday 4th April 6.30pm

I am sitting (in my car again) in a really beautiful spot near the mouth of the river Bela. I can just hear the water flowing over the weir. I can hear sheep and lands and there is birdsong from the hedgerow behind me.... The grassy edge of the road is full of lots of different flowers starting to grow. I can see blossom on some of the trees.... Looking at the trees on the side of the hill opposite I can see some curious white almost spherical shapes in the topmost branches. The more I look the more I see. I realise that the white shapes are Little egrets and the greyer shapes are herons. There are probably more than 20 altogether. Stopping to look is a really novel experience, I'm beginning to like it.

Saturday 5th April 6:30 pm.

I'm sitting in my car in the same spot as yesterday..... Today I can only make out one egret in the trees. The white geese are in a field on the far side of the river and as before I can see a swan just below the weir. I can't hear as much birdsong as yesterday - the sound of the rain might be drowning it out..... Like yesterday I am really glad I've taken a bit of time out of my busy day to look at the world around me.

Tuesday 8th April 5:25 pm.

Today it is very sunny and fairly breezy. I can hear some sheep in the distance and see crows and rooks flying about..... The tall reeds on the riverbank have been fascinating to watch. Although small sections of the reed bed bend and sway together in the breeze the whole reed bed doesn't move in unison. That reeds at one end move differently to those in the middle and they moved differently to the reeds at the far end. Although they are all affected by the same breeze, some parts are more or less affected than others. I shall take some photos and finish for today but will carry an image with me of the reeds bending and swaying in the sunlight. There is something very pleasing about them.

Wednesday 9th April 4:45 pm.

My sit point today is in Ryelands Park. It's been really hard to do this today as I feel I have some urgent tasks to complete before the end of the working day. However, I have been delighted to see two treecreepers.... I know I have a lot of work to do inside the office but I've enjoyed watching the tree creepers and will take that image with me.

Thursday 10th April 7.10 pm.

Back in the spot by the river beta. No herons or egrets so far and no Wind in the reads. Crows and rocks flying around as usual. The sound of the Wear. I can hear some songbirds.... Once again I feel glad that I have taken in a bit of the world. I'm so busy doing things the rest of the time, days go by and I don't even know what the weather was like.

Saturday 12th April 5:40 pm.

Today I am near the bridge looking towards the deer park and closer to the river. It's sunny-ish and from time to time I can feel the warmth of the sun. It is quite windy-I can hear the sound of the wind in the tree under which I normally park and I can hear it as it whistles around the car. Suddenly a flock of herons, maybe some crows, wheeling and soaring in the wind, occasionally dropping into the treetops. I've never seen herons flying like that before-amazing. More magical images to take away.

Sunday 13th April 7:10 pm.

I am sitting in my car, overlooking the Kent estuary and towards Whitbarrow....In the foreground is a channel, very small at the moment, made by water draining off the high ground of Haverbrack and Sandside woods. This channel changes on a daily basis.

Tuesday 15th April 5:55 pm.

Dancing butterflies

Dancing butterflies,
warm evening sun,
gentle rushing of the weir,
startling pink campion.
Warm evening sun,
curlew calling
Butterflies again

Thursday 17th April 7:20 pm.

I didn't really want to go to my sit point today, I was tired and hungry and wanted to get home that I decided to give it 10 minutes.

How is it today to be stopped? Present in this place, not ahead or behind it - it's different. Nothing like the rest of my life. It's no pressure, no agenda, no demands. For now it is now for as long as I choose. It was 25 minutes in the end.

Saturday 26th April 6.00 pm.

It was very still in my place today. Very little movement. Everything seemed peaceful in the early evening sun. All of a sudden the sky darkened and the wind picks up.....As the rain fell I could smell the earth and feel it against my face.... There was absolutely no sign of the little drama that had just unfolded. It has reminded me of some of the things that I have been reading about (mindfulness). The squall that I shared with this place is like a disturbing thought in my mind. It certainly appears, rocks your equanimity, creates feelings of turmoil and distress but, if like the trees, you face it and flex or sway with it - it passes by and the

equilibrium is restored. If the trees, on the other hand became rigid and inflexible their branches would've snapped and they would've been far more affected by the squall. Just as a person tensing up against a disturbing thought is more likely to prolong the effects of that thought and increase the damage it might do to their sense of well-being.

Sunday 27th April 5:30 pm.

I've been watching a heron preening himself while standing on the edge of the weir..... I think I know what is in his mind. My feelings of inner peace and well-being are beginning to dissolve. I can hear quacking and through the reeds I can see the Heron involved in a skirmish in the water. My fears for the ducklings are probably realised. Although this is part of the natural life this place I can't help feeling sad. The Heron flies down river slightly and stands on the grassy bank. A lamb approaches. The Heron and the lamb face each other; it is a moment of pure comedy. Peace, sadness and laughter in one visit!

Monday 28th April 7:30 pm.

I've arrived feeling very stressed as a result of my day at work and I'm pushed for time so will have to be a short visit.... Today it is difficult to shake off the pressing thoughts in my mind. If I could be here longer I think I would de-stress but today that is not an option.

Thursday 1st May 7:30 PM

I can feel the air is much cooler today; almost cold... I can hear the lambs bleating in the field A moment of sunshine lights up the field and an egret flies past. Every so often two swallows chase each other, swooping low across the field below the road. A very exciting chase is going on.. Something rustles behind me. I can see a small rabbit hopping down the bank, pushing through the undergrowth. He knows I'm here and disappears again.

Friday 2nd May 6.00 PM

I have stopped nearby under a large oak tree. I've never really spent time looking at an oak tree before, studying its structure, the twisting, curving branches, the layer of moss on the largest boughs and the flowers. I didn't think about oak trees having flowers. There are birds in the tree; I can hear a particular one singing. For a time the sun is warm on my face but once hidden by cloud the sudden coolness of the air is surprising.

Sunday 4th May 5:50 PM

Very quiet and peaceful here today, apart from a runner padding past and a fly fisherman walking up and down the river bank.

Monday 5th May 10:10 AM

Today I could recognise the song of the bird I had listened to last week. Once located I could see it was the same bird I had watched last week. It's quite a revelation that by taking the time to really notice my surroundings I have been able to differentiate one song in the midst of many others. I'm beginning to understand people who sit and watch birds for a hobby! I've been so pleased to recognise and watch and hear the birds sing that I'm pleased to write it has enabled me to break out of what has been a destructive thinking loop concerning a fallout I have had with my daughter. I am recognising how prone I seem to be too going over and over negative experiences in my mind. I'm quite shocked to see how easily I can slip into this kind of thinking. If I notice my thinking has slipped into this mode, I will recall the bird singing in the Hawthorn and remind myself to live in the present not the past.

Tuesday 6th May 5:10 PM

I've come to the Sit Point today feeling quite saddened following my chance encounter with my daughter earlier today. Her lack of warmth was in stark contrast to the enthusiasm of our chance meeting last week. All afternoon I have thought I had indigestion from eating my sandwiches too fast but sitting here for half an hour is enabled me to realise that what I actually feel is a heavyweight in the pit of my stomach related to my sadness and not

indigestion at all. The positive that has come out of today's sitting is a more accurate interpretation of how I feel and the fact that I can scrub the idea of having peppermint tea when I get home.

Interestingly, now I have got to the end of the entry in the journal my heavyweight feeling is dissipating and I can sense myself feeling more cheerful and lighter in my mood.

Wednesday 7th May 7.10 PM

I've arrived at the sit point feeling quite frazzled from the day and knowing that in 20 minutes I should be out CFR training and I'm hungry. It's quite breezy today. I can see a heron being buffeted by the gusts of wind... While I have been listening to the wind and noticing its different sounds I can feel the tension inside loosening and my body relaxing.

Tuesday 13th May 6:20 PM

It's a beautiful sunny evening. The sun is warm on my face. There is bit of a breeze keeping things cool. I don't know what to write; everything is much the same as before. If I record my direct experience of the place then it's about the felt warm of the sun and the breeze blowing my hair about. It's about hearing the birds singing and the lambs and sheep bleating and seeing the sun shining on the water and seeing the undersides of leaves shining as they are blown about by the wind. Tonight I think I'm in danger of over analysing this experience and so I call it a day at this point.

Wednesday May 14 17 p.m.

It's a lovely golden evening again...The flow of the river seems less tonight.As I look at the river and watch it flow towards the weir it makes me think of my family life. Above the weir, flowing through the park and the fields opposite my sit spot, the river wends its way seaward relatively unchanged. It has its ups and downs and moments of drama but for the most part it is open and shining in the sun. Suddenly it goes over the weir and it changes forever. The river is fundamentally the same but now it is darker, the enclosing banks are steeper and its waters get contaminated by mud, silt and salt. The water can never flow back up the weir and

it was predestined that at some point, the water and the flow of the river would fall over the weir. For me the river above the weir is my family life with all the children at home. The weir represents them leaving and the river below the weir is life after they have left. So basically what I am thinking usefully appreciate the nature of things - good or bad before they change because basically nothing can stay the same forever.

Friday 16th May 9.30am

I'm under the shade of the tree and it's fresh and cool, the sun hasn't warmed the air. There is an overwhelming smell of cow parsley in the air. Although it is a strong smell it is at the same time quite subtle. I find I can't quite smell it enough. The smell is strongly evocative - it reminds me of happy times though I can't recall a specific memory..... I walk down the lane towards the tree in the hope I might see the bird. When I get there I can hear it very clearly and think I can hear a similar bird singing in the hawthorns that grow in a line across the field below the road.... It's very strange but I can't smell the parsley anymore.

Sunday 18th May 7.00pm

Traffic on the Arnside road, aeroplane, sheep baaing, lambs bleating, wind in the leaves, birdsong, wood pigeon cooing, water running over the weir, a motorbike, a car door banging, crows, a very soft clapping noise, a pheasant. The same sounds keep recurring sometimes louder, sometimes quieter. Some sounds drown out other sounds. The sounds come from all around, behind, above, near and far. This is the soundscape of this place at this time of year. I had never thought of a place in terms of its sounds before. I had always defined a place by its visual features. This has been a very peaceful and relaxing 'sit'.

Monday 19th may 7.30pm

After a really stressful day at work today it is very quiet and peaceful here. There is hardly any noise. Not much birdsong, even the sheep and lambs seem quieter. There is a change in the weather too. A little bit cooler, overcast and thundery. Everything looks pretty much the same so it's more about the nature of the sounds today. As I sit I become aware of a very

deep, almost inaudible rumbling. It's not thunder because it is continuous; almost at the limit of my hearing. I listen to it for a while before setting off home.

Wednesday 28th May 7.30pm

I have arrived at the usual place and am sitting in my car today as it is raining. I start with a 3 minute breathing space meditation as I feel quite wound up from my day at work. I have no thoughts - my mind is numb - probably a reaction to the day but I can feel the legacy of the day in my body - the tension in the shoulder, a tight muscle in the back, tension and churning in my stomach and my heart still pounding in my chest. My mind stays numb but I find the sound of the gentle rain falling on the roof of the car soothing and the ever present singing of birds reassuring. After a while thoughts start to flow again and I think about being in this place is like being in limbo. I have left the world of work but have not yet entered the world of home and all that that entails. It is not part of the journey either. It's a time of not being anything but me. Now that I am at the end of being here I have a sense that unconsciously I have been clearing the 'mindtop' and filing the day into appropriate folders. I am feeling ready to go home now.

Friday 30th May 5.15pm

This is the first time I have stopped today. As I sit here I can for the first time feel how much the muscles of my back feel tired and achy. I can feel my heart pounding from the busyness of the day. Although the physical sensations of stress have probably been with me most of the day it is only now that I notice them. As I look at the natural world around me I remember something we talked about during our last meeting. It was about holding unpleasant experience simultaneously with pleasant experience. That is what it feels like here now..... Carl Rogers suggests that people always strive to be the best they can be given their individual circumstances - I think that the cow parsley is doing the same. Looking further afield I have noticed the river. It has stopped flowing, its surface is clouded by brown fallen blossom. (The river is held back by the weir). I can't help but feel a sense of shock. It disturbs

me. The river has always symbolised life and the journey through life. Now it has stopped it feels like it has died. It reminds me of one of 'my' families that I have been working with. Their life has also stopped. I actually feel quite sad. I'd like to pour water into the river to make it flow again just as I would like to make that family live again. It's really hard sitting with this feeling.

Saturday 31st May 7.30pm

It's a lovely evening and I'm sitting looking out over the Kent estuary towards Whitbarrow Scar. I have sat here for about 45 minutes with the dog but although pleasant, it has been a very neutral experience. No particular thoughts or feelings apart from some annoyance at the frequent traffic which drowns out all other sound. The upside of the frequent traffic was the added enjoyment of snatching the sounds in between the passing traffic. It made the gentle sounds of the estuary more precious somehow.

Monday 2nd June 7.20pm

Once again I am almost shocked at the state of my body when I stop and sit. All day long I have had no awareness of the way I hold myself rigidly and the way my heart pounds in my chest. As I sit I can feel the tension begin to loosen like a tightly wound spring beginning to uncoil. There are no particular thoughts apart from ones described above and a feeling of some relief as I physically begin to relax.

B.5 Barbara's journal (abridged version)

Thurs 15/8/13

Had lots of pain this morning, but felt better after the shower and got dressed.

Unfortunately today my pain didn't go and I had to go back home to bed 😞 I have a feeling I am suffering from my hectic day yesterday when I attended the Lunesdale Agricultural Show - I need to pace myself more! Looking forwards to seeing my friends tomorrow, one of whom I haven't seen in a long time so lots & lots to catch up on.

Fri 16/8/13

Elaine and I drove to Darlington to see our old friend Jackie. It was great to catch up with her as We then had a walk into Richmond, what a beautiful town. I struggled towards the end of the walk so we went to a cafe and had a rest then Jackie went back for her car (I felt I was a pain!).

Sat 17/8/13

Got up early for a Saturday and did some housework..... Had a lovely meal and wonderful summer berry crumble with ice cream. Mum, Dad, Mike and I then had a ride up to Lakeland (Windermere) it was very busy - lots of tourists. Didn't stay long, returned mum and dad home, collected the dogs, by which time I was shattered and in pain so went to rest and meditate when we arrived home.

Sun 18/8/13

Woke up with an awful lot of pain 😞. Got up early to move around but didn't really help so went back to bed with heat pad and hot water bottle. My in-laws came for a visit so got up for a while to speak with them, but pain returned so went back to bed to rest.... when I'm in pain I become very irritable and lacking in patience and my son began to irritate me so I took myself off out of the way. Meditated for a while.

Mon 19/8/2013

Woke up with pain but persevered on, got dressed, put heat pad on back for about an hour to try to ease the pain. Rang doctor to let her know about my pain recently and that I had to use a large amount of oxynorm (morphine). She prescribed me some more, also discussed celiac and whether I could possibly be suffering from symptoms such as belatedness, stomach cramps etc. She recommended a blood test and if this proved positive I would need endoscopy to take biopsy.

I felt better after discussion with doctor. I should have attended meeting for XEED (support group for people living with long term health conditions) but felt too unwell! Spent the morning tidying the house, cleaning fish out and ringing around making appointments for dentist, docs etc and resting in between. In the afternoon started with a migraine and back/stomach pain began again so took myself off to bed as the light made my head pound and took my heat pad for my stomach. Did some meditation and then slept for about an hour.

Tues 20/8/13

Met Steve today for our first session at the gateway centre. We discussed my journal and ways I could maybe help myself regarding my pain e.g. take a break on car journey to Darlington and try not to organise too many things in successions as that is when I become ill. We then did some meditation which really relaxed me. Decided to go home before swimming to rest up... When I got home I prepared tea then went to meditate and used the Body Scan which Steve taught me. It helped a little to get through pain, but needed my medication.

‘Sit spot’, noticed busy bees going to brightly coloured thistle type plant, bright purple in colour and also noticed busy bees on the bright yellow daisy type plant.

Note: Throughout her journals Barbara lists her ‘sit spot’ activity in this way, illustrating what she has seen rather than any reflection . For this reason and for brevity most are therefore removed from this section except where they illustrate a point in the main text.

Wed 21/8/2013

Woke up with pain, if I try to meditate in a morning as Steve recommended then I just fall back to sleep. Whereas if I get up, move around and put heat pad on back that seems to ease things after an hour or so...I met Joss and Mum for lunch it was lovely! Then took Joss to see Liam’s flat and met dad there too. Then went shopping with Joss. After I was shattered so went home, did some meditation and had a lot of pain.



Woke up in pain again, heat pad on and sat and did Asda order online because we are going away for bank holiday weekend to Silecroft with friends. Looking forward to having good quality time with Mike, friends and dog 😊.

Thurs 22/8/13

Pain again in the morning. Henry phoned to see if I wanted to go out for lunch at Fly Fisheries and I said yes..... Then went to Carnforth to collect meds and bumped into Sam and Jazzy....

Fri 23/8/13

Pain in morning, then heat pad on. Off to Osteopath, lots of massage to relieve tension in back, also acupuncture. Then set off to Silecroft with Tony, Jordy and Jazzy. Arrived at caravan park and unpacked food etc. Mike and Sam arrived later for tea.

Sat 24/8/2013

Had quite a good night's sleep in the caravan. Had fry up with everyone then had ride to Millom. Came back to campsite then off to beach and Mike and Tony fishing. Really nice watching and listening to sea lapping up on the beach. Took a packed lunch to enjoy with Mike. Got back to caravan and pain started so went to meditate. Had an urgent phone call from Keir, there had been a mix up with hostels and need money transferring to cover costs, which caused me to worry as he was in Brighton with nowhere to stay!

Mon 26/8/2013

1.30am went down to beach with Mike and Tony to watch them fishing. They caught three whiting. Was blissful under stars, listening to waves lapping. Mike brought me back to caravan about 3am. Slept and then woke up with awful pain so couldn't help Mike pack up much 😞.

Note: Try to pace myself better to avoid flare-ups!

Tues 27/8/2013

Pain bad again this morning. Did a few jobs around the house then had to go back to bed again. Back kept throbbing with pain so needed to take strong meds. Took it easy for rest of day - couldn't face swimming. Note: really need to pace better to avoid flare-ups like this!

Wed 28/8/2013

Another bad morning with pain, getting quite down with things at the moment and going to ring doctor on Friday to see about coming off Pregabalin. I'm getting all sorts of side effects i.e. bloated, significant memory loss, irritable dizziness, jumping words, fatigue, dry mouth, depression, mood swings and feel so spaced out! I don't like the person I have become! 😞.

I want to go on gabapentin again. I feel that suited me much better. I got a migraine in afternoon too so had to go and lie down in dark room. Liam, Laura, Keir, nan and grand-dad came round at tea time for Mike's birthday, was nice to see everyone and had chinese for tea.

Thurs 29/8/2013

Had to cancel docs appointment this morning as not well again! Got up for a while and placed heat pad on back, but no relief so had to go back to bed again and take stronger meds! Definitely speaking with doctor tomorrow and mention all horrid side effects. Mum wanted me to go up to hers, but my back is so temperamental at the moment the slight bend, jolt will set off a flare up again! So decided to stay at home, as when I'm ill I just want to be home with all my meds, comfy bed and gel cream to hand. Julie came in afternoon so I took her to see Liam's flat. Later pain came back again 😞. Note: ring doctor tomorrow.

'Sit spot'

Sat in garden and noticed how rusty the chiminea has got. The grill is starting to corrode away at the front. Maybe it's time to wire brush it and respray although I do quite like the rustic character!

Fri 30/8/2013

Another bad morning with pain - had to return to bed to take strong meds and meditate. Asda delivery came which triggered my back pain putting it all away. Spoke with doctor about ongoing problems with pain and other side effects of pregabalin. She wanted to see me to go over how to come off meds and increase dose of gabapentin instead. I really didn't understand what she was saying and felt she was

getting annoyed with me. My husband spoke with doctor to clarify as I was getting upset by it all 😞 .

Sun 1/9/2013

pain was easier this morning.....`Mike and I went for a ride to the garden centre and bought some neon tetras for fish tank. Pain returned in afternoon so went to meditate. Really enjoying the sit spot and sketching, which I haven't done for a long time.

Mon 2/9/2013

Some pain this morning but kept active and did a short walk on the canal banks. The cygnets are losing their grey feathers and the different grasses are becoming wither and dying out. ... Back pain reared in afternoon so took it easy and watched a film.

Tues 3/9/2013

Pain bad this morning but battled through as had to go to Pain Clinic at Preston. They want me to attend 8 week course (impact - improving management of pain and confidence together. It runs 9-30 to 2.30 on a Wednesday starting in October. It involves working with psychologists, physics and others living with pain.

Wed 4/9/2013

Felt a lot of pain this morning but battled through to see Steve today as I'm finding the sessions valuable. Interesting how I'm drawing again. particularly flowers. Pain recurred so tried some of new meditation movements with great which seems to help.

Thur 5/9/2013

Battled the pain this morning because had to go for blood test for celiac and check iron levels. Got a nice text off Wendy wanting to meet up, which was great. Really enjoyed catching up on hols, kids, talking about my artwork. She knows someone in Holme who runs watercolour classes which sounds interesting..... We are both looking forward to yoga class on Monday.

Fri 6/9/2013

Pain as usual first thing, when begin to meditate pain eases a little. Reading through the papers that Steve gave me, I read with interest and pain eases. Asda delivery arrives and spend time bending, lifting, reaching to put order away. Pain returns! Note: Put food away in stages or arrange order for when Mike and Keir at home. Sit quietly with heat pad and take meds and pain eases. Still uncomfortable, go to meditate, but no better so contact docs re: increasing meds.

Sat 7/9/2013

Bad pain through night and morning , but looking forward to my birthday lunch with mam, Joss and Julie. Had quiche and three salads, very wholesome, crunchy and tasty. Enjoyed spending time chatting and reminiscing about family matters. Also called to see my son and his girlfriend - was nice to see them. Liam made me a beautiful berry burst infused fruit tea - delicious 😊.

Sun 8/9/2013

Bad back again today (probably did too much in town yesterday!) * I need to get the hang of pacing!?!* when you feel well you want to do too much - but then it's boom and bust! Quiet day today I think. Returned to bed in afternoon, take strong meds because pain won't go 😞.

Snuggled up in my cosy dressing gown, heat pad and neck cushion which felt really cosy.

Mon 9/9/2013

rested through pain in morning, trying to pace myself today as counselling this afternoon then yoga tonight with my friend. Excited and anxious about yoga, but was very relaxing. Will take extra blankets and cushion for next week to make myself more comfortable. When doing yoga my mind kept wandering, but was then able to go back to it. I think it will prove beneficial and enjoyed spending time with my friend. Used lots of listening skills during yoga 😊.

Tues 10/9/2013

Pain not too bad this morning after yoga - I think I might be OK with it (hopefully!). After attending First Step (Mental Health Service) Nicky thinks it's not good for me to bottle things up inside, this can cause anxiety, stress and make pain worse. I should share how I feel with Mike - (about feeling lonely, isolated etc.) and suggest doing a couple of things together rather than going separate ways. She also gave me three workbooks on assertiveness. Mike was very annoyed, aggressive towards me, but I just told him how I felt. We have agreed to try and do a couple of things together this

week, so we'll see if it happens? Was great to see everyone at swimming, but afterwards pain returned so tried to meditate through pain 😞.

Wed 11/9/2013

Pain not good this morning (after swimming). Attended Morecambe Bay ME Support Group to discuss benefits of Self Management UK. Felt like I was able to support others and was great to see Janette again.

Thur 12/9/2013

My 50th birthday. What a surprise, living room all decorated with balloons, banners, flowers! Quite overwhelmed that I am loved so.... lucky to have such a brilliant family and friends, I won't forget my 50th 😊.

Fri 13 Sept

Met Kath B for lunch, tried to be supportive as she's having a rough time with her illness - nice to know I can be of help.

'Sit spot'

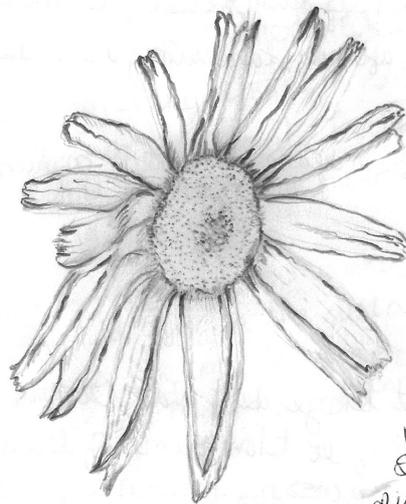
Sat gazing at Farleton Knott with its limestone pavement with scree and gorse bushes. Brought back lots of happy memories as child spent up on Knott. Always feels like I'm close to home when I can see Farleton Knott, it's my landmark 😊.

B.6 Sample Journal Pages

B 5.1 Barbara's journal sample pages

B 5.1.1 September page

Sit quietly with heat pad + take meds + pain eases.
Still uncomfortable, go to meditate, but no better so contact
doc re: increasing meds.



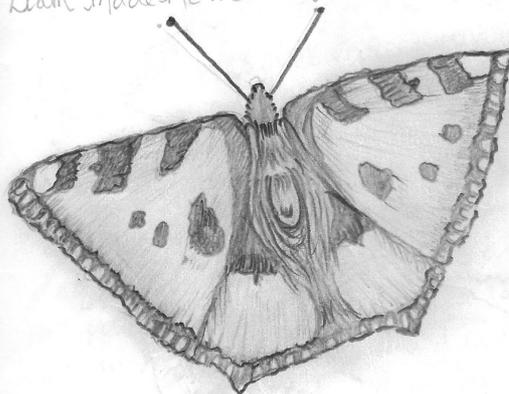
Sit spot

The petals of the daisy
are individually shaped
and the center is made up
of tiny circular bits
whilst drawing the sense
of touch is so vital in
making dark/light shade,
differing pressures with the
pencil + using the finger to
smudge adds effects to the
picture.

Had quiche + 3 salads -
V. wholesome, crunchy + ~~crispy~~

Sat, 7 Sept.

Bad pain thro night + morning, but looking forward to
my birthday lunch with Mam, Joss + Julie. Enjoyed spending
time chatting + reminiscing about family matters. Also
called to see my son + his girlfriend - was nice to see them.
Liam made me a beautiful cherry burst infused fruit tea - delicious 😊



The colours on the butterfly
are so vibrant - red, orange,
black + blue... it is attracted
to brightly coloured yellow
flowers.

5.1.2 Reflecting on photographs



I enjoy looking up at the trees, recognising their unusual patterns that

The branches make. You can even see the fur cones if you look closely.

A lot is made of designer labels these days and how expensive things are,

but isn't it lovely to just

value nature and what it has to offer - and its free!



B. 5.1.3 Photocollage



B 5.2 April's journal sample pages

B 5.2.1 6th May journal entry

Tuesday 6th May 5.10pm.

I've come to the sit-point today feeling quite saddened following my chance encounter with my daughter earlier today. Her lack of warmth was in stark contrast to the enthusiasm of our chance meeting last week. All afternoon I have thought I have had indigestion from eating my sandwiches too fast but sitting here for half an hour has enabled me to realise that what I actually feel is a heavy weight in the pit of my stomach related to my sadness & not indigestion at all.

I've watched a cock pheasant cross the field on foot, seen half a dozen crows behaving as if they are having a meeting, seen swallows overhead and heard a new bird song but I haven't been lifted or excited by it today as perhaps I might have been on another occasion. The positive that has come out of today's "sitting" is ~~an~~ more accurate interpretation of how I feel and the fact that I can scrub the idea of having peppermint tea when I get home.

Interestingly, now I have got to the end of this entry in the journal my heavyweight feeling is dissipating & I can sense myself feeling more cheerful & lighter in my mood.



B 5.2.2 4th June journal entry

Wednesday 4th June

I have really been thinking about mindfulness and health visiting at work today and have been taking opportunities to be mindful as much as I can throughout the day. It's made a fantastic difference in the level of stress I've felt today. I've stopped at the end of the day, on my way home, to write this and I don't feel tense, rigid, there is no tense knot in my stomach, my shoulders don't ache and my heart is not pounding. It is a complete contrast to how I felt at the end of work last week.

I started the day with a 3 minute meditation and could identify all the usual feelings of anxiety about the new day plus all the accompanying physical sensations. I used the notion of the kindly breath to wrap & support all these unpleasant sensations. I also used the idea of thinking ahead about the likely culprits for inducing stress in the day such as the computer taking ages to get going or "freezing" in mid journal, people not returning calls, wrong phone numbers, IT challenges, problematic e-mails, post I don't know what to do with etc etc. This was similar to the sound meditation where we talked about sounds that were intrusive but were actually just a part of the normal soundscape for that location. Having recognised the intrusive sounds belonged there I could accept them. In the same way these stressors described above are

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Appendix C - Interview transcripts

These transcripts are extracts from videos of semi structured interviews and open discussions with participants.

C.1 - Meg Interview

Sorry, this looks like a prison photograph (laughing - referring to initial video image)

Does it? (Meg laughs). Probably, me and cameras aren't the best of mates (still laughing)

Meg can we start by you explaining what your illness is?

OK, as with many people with chronic pain it's a bit complicated. I have Fibromyalgia but I have an unstable right shoulder that's also affecting my spine, parts of my spine are very rigid, from trying to stabilise my right shoulder.

What do you mean 'it's unstable'?

The clavicle is in two bits and they press on the main nerve bundle down my right arm. I'm also hypermobile.

What does that mean?

Well very bendy, or double jointed.

So that sounds like it could be good? I'm not sure if it is?

The problem is that my upper spine and my lower spine and my hips are exceedingly flexible but because my thoracic spine as stiffened to try and stabilise my right shoulder I've got a built in imbalance now there, so I get a lot of problems throughout my spine really.

OK, so how does this combination of illnesses affect your daily life?

Hmm, it means that I'm restricted in being able to carry very much, move a chair, carry shopping, pull or push heavy doors. Fire doors in hospitals are a bit of a nightmare (laughs), and also sitting for long periods, anything more than half an hour at a time really, I become extremely uncomfortable..

Ok so when did all this start?

Well I had a car accident in my twenties, so (laughs) that was mid seventies, so it's gradually had more and more impact on me but then about ten or twelve years ago, quite literally overnight I woke up with dreadful pain in my right arm and that's after a lot of investigations where they really something had changed in my body and that my flexible clavicle was bending onto the nerve bundle down my right arm

What was the impact that that had on your life, prior to mindfulness?

Prior to mindfulness I worked my socks off that was how I dealt with it. Once I got back to be able to work, I had about a year where I was able to do very little and I gradually managed to get back to where I could work and I worked all over the country

What was that work?

I did commissions in steel, sometime in wood, on paper for

Sorry this is as an artist?

An artist yes

Not as a welder?

I work with local communities on their connections with their locality really

OK.... you saw your doctor and they were giving you stuff too?

They took an x-ray of my back, they couldn't see anything wrong, they gave me pain killers so I'd drive off to north wales or wherever I was working on painkillers, and I was very busy, I'd got three children so was very busy at home as well as working and basically trying to blank it all out

Ok

Not very effectively

So what changed that got you to go on a mindfulness course?

When my pain suddenly literally overnight kicked in and completely grounded me I gradually over a year got back to being in a car. I knew I was living my life in a very unsustainable way. I felt I was running away from pain and you get too old to be able to run fast enough in the end and I needed to be able to do something different.

Ok so how did you know what to do that was different?

I didn't know what to do, but my GP also worked in a pain management unit in Bradford

This is Frances Cole yes?

Yes she suggested Breathworks and I thought they seemed very fluffy and new agey and I didn't want to go so I didn't.

OK so why didn't you want to go, what do you mean fluffy and new agey?

I thought it sounded like a load of hippy nonsense with no scientific background to it and I wasn't going to believe it and then she said again, she suggested another time that I go and that time I'd had lots of different drug regimes seen physios and osteopaths and had no end of investigations and I knew there weren't any more investigations that I could have, they said it was too late to do anything about my collarbone and it effected my spine and they couldn't do anything about that because they had at that point realised I was hyper mobile and that was a factor so I thought I'd better try something different so I put on my best sort of meeting clothes my best jacket from Oxfam and I went along to Manchester Buddhist Centre

How did that feel? Going to a Buddhist Centre?

Well it's completely different to anything I'd done before, I'd been brought up as a Christian and I'd rejected it when I was about 14 and I didn't want to have anything to do ever again with anything I deemed to be a religion

OK I'm just intrigued about the new aged hippy stuff and going to a Buddhist centre which is like a big thing to whack you round the head with isn't it?

Yes it felt it was just a sot of, well perhaps I could have got a bit of understanding of Buddhism in the Far East but in the UK it seemed like a load of hippies who were probably a bit Hare Krishna people who walk round ringing bells a lot AND they might want to convert me

OK

And I wasn't having that

OK, so you turned up at this class

Yes

Was that the standard sort of eight week living well with pain course?

It was, well no at that point it was a ten week, so it was a six week and then an optional four week

OK

How did that feel?

Well the first week we did a body scan, and I'd done yoga in the past and relaxation so that kind of made sense, I thought this could be useful and I'm pretty conscientious so I went away and practiced and we came back and we had a discussion about meditation and I they said what do you think meditation is and I said it was a complete mystery I thought it was like astral planning you know float off on a mat somewhere..(laughter) I was highly prejudiced

Ok and then what happened?

And then we did mindfulness of breathing

Ok

Now I'd used, I'd been to national childbirth trust prior to giving birth and I found it really helpful

Found what really helpful?

I found being aware of your breath in labour getting you through labour using your breath as a tool for managing a very at times painful experience, not all the time as you have breaks between contractions but I kind of have a lot of faith in the breath as a tool, so mindfulness of breathing.. got that

Ok so can I just check a minute, you'd done yoga before and you knew the benefits of that and that's where you'd come across the body scan type activity?

Yes, well I come across a relaxation type activity in relation to your body

And you'd done a national childbirth trust thing where you'd learnt about how breathing helped with your labour pain

Yep

So why was this different?

Because it applied to.. because it applied to everyday life I think in a way you know with the NCT breathing techniques they applied only to giving birth to children so I didn't see them as transferable, the body scan

Do you think they were?

Not as they were taught there no, and the body scan was taught as a relaxation and I'd been in the unfortunate position of being given a relaxation tape by a mental health nurse once and it was obviously the guy in the office who'd got the short straw who did it (laughter) and he was so fed up at having to do it, it came through in his voice but at the end of yoga we used to do relaxation and that did work so I kind of had that

experience to go on and the body scan was just you didn't have to relax and at that point it was just impossible to relax

For you to relax you mean

Yes I had pain and you know it felt impossible to relax

So how was the body scan different to what you'd done in yoga?

Because it was taking your attention to different parts of the body and it also I suppose another thing I'd done was the tensing and relaxing of muscles and it wasn't like that it was just taking your attention to what was actually happening in your body and when I went to breathworks when I started the course I felt like I had a massive jagged rock on my shoulders that was totally solid and immovable and what I gradually and it took quite a while to learn but what I'd gradually begun to realise was that there was some change, some fluidity in the sensations I was feeling

So how long did that realisation take?

I think I got glimmers of it quite early on but to get rid of that rock probably to a year or more, but it got smaller (laughs)

Ok so we were talking about body scan and then mindfulness of breathing

Yes

So that's into the first couple of weeks of that ten week course

Yes and what is meditation

Yes so what else did you cover on that ten week course?

Well we did pacing, diaries

How did you feel about that, because you'd act quite an active life?

Well I did it and my reaction was well everything hurts, everything I do gives me pain so what help is this

Ok

But you know I think I was being, yes I was very active and that and I like walking on the moors near me and when my pain first got very bad I couldn't even walk in the garden it was taking me all my time to walk from my house the 20 yards to my car to visit a doctor

Ok so if that's how it was before you got there that you liked to walk on the moors near where you live, you liked to go in the garden and all of a sudden you couldn't how did that inability feel? Did that have an impact on your overall sense of wellbeing, that you couldn't go out in the garden that you couldn't go out on the moors

Yes I was absolutely who I was, what I did, not to say that I didn't do it very often when I was on auto pilot... that I'd take.. when I was working hard I'd take my dog for a walk first thing in the morning chances are I would have no idea of what was there on the walk, I'd remember crossing the road going through the gate but I wouldn't remember anything between that and coming through the gate to cross the road again at the end

Ok so what else did you learn?

Well I think actually by doing the diaries I did learn something

Ok

I think I learned through the diaries that I was filling all my time up with busyness, even though I couldn't be as busy as I was, I could always find things to do that needed doing like the cleaning or ridiculous stuff

Other stuff, other meditations for example?

Well I can't remember quite the sequence but at some point we did the kindly awareness practice. I think I might have missed the week it was introduced but you know it was kept on been led and I had the cd and I did this course in the autumn. It wasn't until I came to Taraloka on a graduates retreat in July august the next year that I realised there was a first stage

Ok it's an important stage

Yes and how I managed to blank it out I don't know unto this day but I didn't know it was there and I could reflect on that and say that what I think was happening was that I'd grown up looking after my mum and two brothers, looking after three kids, I was always somebody who was a good help to friends, friends come with hard time, I'd always listen and try and do what I could so I looked after other people and I did not want other people looking after me

OK, even yourself looking after you

No cos there's always someone worse off than you dear I quote

You quote?

Yes, that was my mum and I think that is obviously true

Right

Yes

OK, So?

So I was hanging on by a thread, I knew I needed to do something and then between finishing the course and going on the graduates retreat in the summer there were two, well I suppose three retreat days, well practice days after the courses and that letter would land on my desk and I'd be going 'Oh thank God it's Breathworks thank God I can go and have a day'

OK

Obviously I wasn't doing a great job in terms of integrating it

That's one of the things that interests me, I'm interested in what could help integrate, so you've said it took quite a while, a year for everything to sink in?

Well to sink in and sort of deepen I think really

OK and do you think that's important that you have to get to a depth?

For me yes, I think you know to really embed it, erm yes I think that there is a depth of practice that's really valuable erm and it's also about you know for me I think the idea of integration is really valuable

What do you mean by integration?

Well, not just doing the meditation and I think that's what took the time and yes I will do the meditation but then I could be incredibly busy for the rest of the day and it didn't sort of have that much effect or as much effect as I think it probably does now when it feels more integrated

So one of the things I'm interested in you mentioned you've got this love of nature

Yes yes

Where did that come from?

That came from partly my mum and partly being in nature was a safe place to be, it wasn't at home it was outdoor exploring the streams and...

So what age are we talking about

7, 8, 9

Ok so it's childhood connections that you've kept going

Yes, yes

OK, so let me just ask, what are you describing when you use that word nature?

(smiles) good question, (long pause) I'm talking about being outdoors

OK

Away from people, away from towns, cities, villages, houses. Somewhere where you can sort of get lost in the natural world, so not

What do you mean by get lost?

Where there aren't other people, where you can be on your own (smiling) and experience you know walking through a stream, sitting by trees, looking at birds and yes something quite solitary

OK

Or possibly with one friend but not with a whole bunch of people

OK, and is that how you prefer to engage with nature?

Yes

That solitude

Very much so yes, I see it as a place of yes, refuge really

So what I'm interested in is that you've got this mindfulness practice that you've learned or mindfulness practices that you've learned, you've got this long held enjoyment of nature

Mmm

Does one help the other?

It can, when you see the connection

OK

But I'm not, you know, I think the way I was taught I didn't really see the connection at that point

OK, but now you teach

Yes

So do you see a connection as a teacher yourself?

Yes, most definitely, because that's what being in nature, I mean I to be honest I don't have to just be out somewhere completely wild and away from everyone else, I can see a dandelion coming up through a crack in the city and enjoy it or a bird flyover and really get something from that so long as I'm in a reasonably mindful and aware frame of mind and so long as I'm not being overly busy and I'm giving myself time, to savour it, rather than going yep, bird nice, next thing

(Laugh) Ok I'm interested in how you're making one feed off the other so how nature helps your mindfulness practice and how mindfulness helps your nature practice if you like?

I think mindfulness helps my nature practice in that erm I'm more likely to use my senses, not just my sense of sight and I'm very erm I worked most of my life as an artist and I've got a strong visual sense erm but you know to smell and to touch, you know and to feel, to feel the wind on my face or the warmth of the sun on my arm or erm and also you know the other thing I like about nature is the drama when there's a storm coming or the wind is going crazy and the trees are kind of rattling about everywhere

OK that sounds quite a dramatic thing so how are you connected to it

Because I can sort of feel it in my body

OK, and does mindfulness help with that feeling?

It brings, it allows me to pay attention to it and to notice it and to be with it moment by moment as it changing and I think that you know that this idea of change, that's something about the natural world, when you are really able to look at it and see it everything is changing, there is constant change in the natural world

Ah hum

The seasons change but a flower can change over a day or even over a minute

OK and how has nature impacted on your mindfulness practice?

It enriches it hugely

And do you think that is important?

Yes because I get so much more from it. I stop and notice, I realise that it is something, and this is part of the kindly awareness, I realise, I remember that it is something that really kind of gives me huge pleasure

OK

And in the past I wouldn't always remember that. I would take my dog for a walk not notice where I walked

Yes

Whereas now I have a much more deliberate intention to go out and experience the natural world whether it's grey and a bit miserable looking or it's a beautiful sunny day or it's throwing a wild crazy storm

OK now both we've worked together on courses and teaching and we've used things like the sense awareness inventory, how do you convey to participants in mindfulness programmes that you talk to about that value of that nature connection?

I think partly it's just, sometimes it is just coming in at the start of a session and I will have quite possibly have been for a walk, sometimes just around the garden, because I don't have a lot of energy now due to my condition so sometimes I can't walk very far but sometimes I can get completely immersed in a raindrop on a blade of grass and I can just really stop and watch it and see it and look at the reflection in that raindrop and notice the fragility of that piece of grass as it's moving and I will talk about that experience to people and I think it is very obvious what joy and pleasure I get from that as I talk about it

And do you encourage them to find their own connection

Yes most definitely, they can't just go on my piece of grass

Laughter

But the other thing is I think that I've realised erm even when I'm not feeling good and I can't maybe go very far, a friend of mine with mobility problems I remember her saying 'at least you can look out of the back door'

Ah hum

And I've always remembered that and you know if I'm at home and I'm not feeling well there's a gate that I look out on from my window, if it's been raining it has drops just kind of hanging on the underside of it and I love to watch those drops (smiles)

So I'm wondering, if that's what you're doing, you're just watching those drops one of the things you're taught on a mindfulness course is that people do things for distraction, they do things to block sensations and what have you. Is that what you're doing with the nature connection, just blocking or is it deeper than that?

I really don't think that I'm doing that, I might need to think this through for a minute or two but it really doesn't feel like that. When I'm talking to you about you know seeing that raindrop or something, I mean I can, I'm just getting really strong sensations, actually physical sensations, kind of through my body and it's just, just enriches my life in a very simple little way and I might just look at it for a couple of minutes

Enriches your life more than a meditation practice would?

Not more than, because I think the meditation practice helps to heighten my awareness in day to day life and for me particularly in nature because that's something you know that I love

So they are definitely feeding of each other?

Well yes they are I mean if I didn't practice mindfulness meditation have you know those real times of stillness where I'm practicing sort of in a concentrated, focused way, I don't think I would have the same eerm awareness when I was outside in a natural world

OK..... Right, if the natural world wasn't there do you think the, your mindfulness practice all the way from your ten week course through all the other things that you've done in the last year, would they have had the same impact?

Without nature? Are you suggesting I lived in the city or something without nature?

Well it might be that we're talking to someone who can't walk, who's in a residential unit in the centre of London, what they look at is the block across the street. Do you think that would feel, have a very.. so they might have a mindfulness practice that made them, helped them sit on a cushion or something how would that feel to you?

I have this strong belief that human beings are part of this world we live in, where we are inextricably linked to it, tied to it, it feeds us. We need it as much as, well it doesn't really need us I think it's essential to human wellbeing to have a relationship to the natural world so the person you've just described erm very much cut off, I mean you could look out of a window, you could maybe smell a flower or scent that someone brought it, you could also feel texture, that you know

This comes back to that five senses thing on the programme

Exactly it does and I think you know and that's enriched my life and OK the majority of the columns in that sense awareness inventory have got a lot of nature in them but they have other things too. They have the smell of toast and of coffee and the feel of my dog's soft ears

Which is all nature

Laughs, it is actually, laughs

So in terms of a mindfulness programme that involves nature, do you think they are natural bedfellows if you like? I'm using the word natural! (laughs)

You are aren't you. Yes I think that most definitely, I think, actually I think my view is any mindfulness course would be hugely enriched using as much nature as there was available and that yes I've done workshops in hotels in the middle of Birmingham with natural materials. You can get a plastic bag and pack it with a load of beautiful leaves in the Autumn and take them in

So just to finish off, you've still got the condition you've got how's life

Rich

Excellent thank you

C.2 - April Interview

Ok, so what would be really good would be if we could start by just... like a reminder of why you started doing the programme.

Alright then, what did I do at the start, what, right at the very beginning?

Yes

OK well my anxiety was getting really bad and erm..., and I trawled on NHS choices to see what I could do to help myself and there were links to mindfulness..

Yes

And I got in tune with that really. And then I started trawling around the internet to find out what I could do locally, eventually I managed to get in touch with you.

But you've done some stuff with Mark Williams workbook?

When I couldn't find anybody locally, I thought well it'll have to be self-help then. So that's when I sent off for the workbook and the Finding Peace in A Frantic World?

Yes

and I met you, so yes I read the book you gave me and the Mark Williams book and the workbook. I haven't actually completed, if you like filled it in or anything but yes so that was how I started it.

We've done quite a lot of different things, so we've done lots of meditation stuff but we've also had this nature based.. the sit spot, things like that. So what have you found valuable?

Well I've found the sit spot (pause thinking) well that's something I'd.. would have never ever been able to do, just to stop and sit in a place, that would have been utterly alien to me, I might have told you before that because of my anxiety I work really really hard to keep all these horrible thoughts out of my head and if you sit anywhere you're kind of inviting them in aren't you? So there you were asking me to sit and look at stuff and notice what was going on around me and it felt dead weird at first. That's why I had to take a cup of tea outside, take the dog, have something to do, that's why I wrote so much because it's really hard. But actually quite quickly I found that I could do it and I started to notice that... I could actually sense my whole body my body often feels like a coiled up spring with the tension I could actually feel the spring releasing, myself unwinding and erm and sometimes I felt almost as if time had actually stopped because I was kind of I was quite immersed in that place I did get to feel that I was part of the life of that place that was really nice you can't make yourself feel that, and then you come out of that feeling as well, but that was really good. Then I started to.. right OK this is really valuable and I really made sure I did it. I had to do it on my way home from work, that was the time I was alone and I went past it on my way home from work, and then I wanted to get home and I'd think well I'll just spend 10 or 15 minutes there and quite often I would spend 30 or 40 minutes because, because (thought) I knew it was good.. in a very internal way, yes

Can you say a little bit more about what you mean by good

Well, what do I mean by good? Peaceful, it was really peaceful. That was probably one of the most overwhelming sensations.. of feeling peaceful and yes feeling peaceful. And also I remember initially my surprise at actually my realisation that I'd been going through life and the environment thinking I'd seen it but actually I'd never really seen it and it made me really glad that for at least one part of every day I'd seen what was going on around me and I actually knew a bit of the world in a way that I'd never known it before rarely ever taken the time to really experience it and, well I was shocked that I'd never done that before because I think I look at everything when I go home but actually I don't (laughs) so it's a revelation really and I wouldn't like to lose that.

It's interesting you said about that connection and one of your journal entries was about how you felt a bit low because you'd seen the water dry up

Oh yes that's right, yes

There's a sense of that connection to something changing

Yes because that disturbed me, the river had come to represent my life in a sense that it was on a journey that it was going somewhere it was alive and flowing and when it appeared to stop that took me by surprise how much I was disturbed by that I think it was because I unconsciously I suppose previously identified with it the flow of the water, the passage of the water and the changes and the flow of the water and the changing nature of the water and I've kind of talked about it haven't I previously I think about how it's a bit like my life you know when somethings coming up but when it happens it hits you with a shock and the falling over the waterfall and it all

completely changes and you can't go up a waterfall can you, you can only go down it, it's all so definite there's no going back... yes

And you've spoken in your journal about how some other things that you saw had an impact. Everything from the lamb and the heron facing each other off (liz laughing) to your reaction when someone else is in the same place, things like that

Yes and then I was in the place of, was it a wren? I was in their patch and I kind of quite identified with how that wren felt about me there, I felt like that about the artist in my patch so I suppose you've developed a respect for other creatures doesn't it, we share the planet, it's not our planet it's all of our planet

So did you think like that before?

I may... not in such a deep, not in such a way of knowing I felt like that. I thought it may have fleetingly crossed my mind but only occasionally

So you've said that you were doing this on the way home

Yes

What difference if any, does it make to you when you get home having done it?

Physically I'm much less tense and much more relaxed, if I didn't do it and went straight home I'd still be carrying all the day with me into home, I would hope, well I just carry it with me I wouldn't have lost it

So what would be the impact of that?

What would be the impact? well, I suppose when I'm carrying all the stress of the day then I'm not such a nice person (laughs) you know I'm tense and I'm short and not so tolerant and patient, restless, yes

You're painting quite a negative picture (laughs) of yourself, I'm wondering what your husband would say?

I don't know what he'd say I'm not really sure

Because you did mention at one point that he had noticed and felt that you were closer

I think he did say that didn't he, he's not said anything since then but he's just undergone a big change himself, which is he's retiring, so he himself has had a difficult time over the last few weeks getting into the pattern of not going to work in fact he hasn't found that easy so he's been quite distant in a way and a bit unapproachable in a way, well not unapproachable but I've had to just leave him, yes

As well as your husband, you've mentioned a couple of time about daughters been for the weekend and the weekend not been that successful, have you found mindfulness as helped you then

Now yes in that, I was just thinking of something this weekend, I did manage something better than I would normally have managed, I'd made an assumption that my daughter was coming with her nine month old grand daughter and my son was coming with a disturbed dog and I made the assumption that they'd make alternative plans for the disturbed dog because it has bitten my husband a few times and so when my son asked if he could bring the dog I said I wasn't happy with him bringing the

dog with the baby there and he was, he said OK yes OK fine I'll not come then. Now normally I would have been absolutely upset about having to have said that to him, I would have beat myself up about not having checked it all out beforehand and given myself a hell of a time but actually I was really good at accepting the situation was how it has to be. I was just able to say right OK well this is the situation and OK I don't really like it, it's not ideal but actually this is how life is and this is what it is, there'll be another opportunity for them to come, whether it's them and a dog (laughs)

And if that's family what about work?

Work?

Because we've spoken in the past about how you do masses more hours than if you like... the contract

Yes that's right

There's not accounting for difficult patients or people you've got to see and the extra time they take so you've got to deal with quite a lot, how's mindfulness helping?

It's helped loads because again it's about just recognising that work will never be an ideal situation and that there's always a greater demand than we can... the need is always greater than we can possibly meet and resources are limited and if there is no money to buy new filing cabinets well don't make a fuss about it just look for an alternative thing and don't waste your energy on getting upset about it and so I think things have been pretty good and just say right well here we are that's how it is, that's what we're working with so its helped lot in not fighting the system well the

organisation and not getting in a stew about how it not being how we'd like it to be because it never will be will it? And it's also helped a lot in managing all the competing demands that come in throughout the day so part of the nature of the job is that I come in at start time and then there'll be, there'll be messages in the book something serious that needs your attention today and then there'll be messages by email that you've got to do this by tomorrow and then people will ring up and there'll be a crisis about that and then you've got your actual booked visits it just feels like (uses arms to indicate things coming from all directions) there's stuff coming in at you the whole time and you're continually having to, you know, ditch your plans and do something else and I think what it, what I've found helpful is doing the 3 minute breathing spaces and acknowledging that that's what's going on in my mind and how it's making me feel and then it's like the mind is a bit clearer and I can see my way more easily I think oh actually that's not so important I can actually not do that I really now know that that is the most important thing and it will be my decision to focus on that next so that's incredibly helpful otherwise prior to doing the mindfulness training I used to start one job because I thought it was the most important and then in my head there would be a voice (uses hand to signify external voice chattering in mind) yak, yak, you've got to do this job and I would start doing that job because I'd then heard that that was the most important and then another one (uses chattering hand on other side of head) would be but that jobs more important and then I'd start doing that job and so I'd do no job properly and I'd just flit from thing to thing just trying to keep this horrible voice in my ear from saying you're not doing the most important job. But now I make a decision having had some space and know that I'm going to do that job. That's what I'm going to do, that's my decision of how I'm going

to spend my time now, and that calms me down. I don't think it matters that I don't always get the decision right but I feel better (laughs)

Good, Ok?

Yes, that's a bit of a long winded explanation (more laughing)

And so it's helping with that aspect of work you've mentioned quite a bit about the management, your choices whatever what about your clients, do you think it's helping there?

I think it helps mm using the meditation, the breathing space, between clients because you don't want to carry the angst from one client into the next visit because you kind of need to go in fresh and open and be fully aware of what's going on in the next visit so that's really helpful, because it does.....

And is that a change from the past?

Yes because I didn't do that before, if I'd gone to somewhere and someone had freaked me out about what was happening I'd be so full of angst that the next visit would be a pain because I'd want to sort that one out erm.. because if I'd, you know that would be panicking me in my mind but now (big sigh) I don't do that, I can draw a line and just, I can just sort of hold it in my head, I'm not (pauses) when I knew what the thought was, when I think about what I'm thinking I can say.. I can acknowledge that I feel really worried about something and panicked and just by acknowledging it I'm much more able to file it away and sort it out later. So that's, that's a really useful thing to be able to do at work.

We've talked about conflicting demands, haven't we? Of what the organisation wants you to do and what you feel you should do, paperwork versus people conflict and I wonder how that helps?

I think it is about having.. giving yourself a space to think about what the priorities of the visit are, and I think it's about making the decision, giving yourself time to make a decision and knowing why you've decided to do something. So in the end I think, when you're working in healthcare, as long as you can reasonably justify your actions, why you've chosen a particular thing to do that's OK and it doesn't actually mean you can't do what the organisation wants, tripped up there, because if you did go in and put the person first you actually get a lot of information, you receive a lot of information and you can come back to the form and fill it in afterwards. But if you go in with the form because that's what the health service would like you to do it's just a tick list so that they can say you've done it. And if you just work down this tick list I don't think you get anywhere. Not good, yes, I think, I think it enables me to perhaps be more person centred in my work or have a, how shall I put it, made a positive decision about that.

And is being more person centred good?

I think being more person centred is very good and is in tune with my philosophy if you like, yes that's what I want to be like

OK

That's why it's a conflict for me, the bally forms

OK we've talked about family, we've talked about work

Yes

One of the things you said when we started was how you hadn't been able to go for a walk

Yes

We've had quite a focus on nature

Yes we have

We've done about the sit spot, being aware of all your senses, walking meditation, things like that and I think you said you had been for walks now

I have, I have managed much better, and I've managed longer walks haven't I? and erm I'm just trying to recall that, when we went up to Easedale Tarn, that was really successful walk, I couldn't, that's right I remember thinking about... because it came to me when I was finding, because it's walking uphill when it's like... I know it's mainly a path up there but you still become really aware of where you're placing your feet so it became quite a mindful activity, the walking in itself and it was quite easy to do, rather than just walking along tarmac is just not the same feedback (leans forward) and I think that was extremely helpful, that was really helpful. So we got there and we did it and then on the way back I chose to, rather than want to get back to a place of safety as I always do if I possibly can, I actually didn't want to get back because I'd become alert to how brilliant it was to be able to look at what I was seeing, in a way I'd never done that before, I'd never, never been able to sit somewhere and actually see things, you know I'd have a cursory glance but, so we did stay there quite a while,

as I remember telling you when I was just more aware of everything there was to see and that was some of a very new experience for me, yes

So what impact did that have on the walk?

It was brilliant

You weren't on your own?

No Simon was there, I recall that regularly and I have the pictures in my mind of the things that I was looking at you know, I wanted to do that again lots of times

OK

Yes

And now you know you can

Yes that's right, yes

Whereas before you'd mentioned there was this fear so you wouldn't even set off

I wouldn't set off and even if I'd got somewhere, sometimes my fear, you'd think it would be better on the way back, sometimes actually it's worse going back erm I don't know why, but it is, so that was actually an achievement, a real achievement, yes

So looking at all the things that you've just said, how would you say you've changed? Have you changed?

Yes

And how's life?

Life, I think it's richer now, erm and I'm not so frightened if you like of just being by myself and erm I know what it is, I've got more options, I can manage my feelings better, I don't need to retreat, it doesn't matter. Before when I was anxious I would do everything to get rid of that feeling as quickly as I possibly could, but you get a better sense of freedom now because actually, I'm not brilliant at it but I know now that it's OK just to be anxious, that's OK, just be anxious it doesn't particularly feel very nice, but actually it's OK. I don't have to try distract myself I don't have to try and not be be lots of things It's work in progress it's I feel I'm still at the beginning of it, but it opens up more possibilities and natures always there isn't it, always there, a bit like breathing and then as long as I can see and hear and feel, I've always got that to erm, to focus on

So do you think that that awareness of nature has helped you develop your mindfulness practice?

Yes I do, If I, I know we focus on breathing and people say the breath is always there and yes it's always there, that's fine but actually the natural environment is also always there even if you're in a city it's always there isn't it because you can find it and erm I only need to look out of the window if I need to or sit in the car or go in the garden and I can achieve some kind of meditative erm place by focusing on nature, yes definitely

OK thank you

C.3 - Greta Interview

OK so can we start by you talking a little bit about what you do now?

Do you mean in terms in terms of work?

Work, life,

Right OK, I have two part time jobs. So I work for the community group managing their volunteering programme, I'm working with volunteers, many of whom need some support because they are visually impaired or have learning difficulties or have mental health problems or are unemployed etc. So we're looking after 9 acres of parkland and kitchen garden and community facilities. I'm also involved in editing the newspaper for the local prison with a small writing team.

That sounds quite a lot?

Well it's all very interesting. In theory it's about three and a half days a week but I suspect that in reality it's more like five because they tend to spill out from their areas and certainly the community group work does involve quite a bit of extra volunteering as well.

And you say managing people, how much responsibility, how much impact do you feel that management position has on your daily life?

It is very interesting but it's also potentially quite tiring because I might have up to 25 volunteers in on the day and I'm constantly both listening for the mood of group and sorting out any difficulties but I'm also doing a lot of individual support for example I've recently had a volunteer who came to see me because he'd started self harming, so I've needed to talk to him about his situation and then refer him on to appropriate services so there is a responsibility to help people who are vulnerable.

OK, so that is a little bit of an intro into your work, what about home life?

Home life, Ok, well I'm married with a wonderful husband and have 4 adult children who still take an amount of input and outside that I'm interested in birdwatching, walking and kayaking, spending weekends away, being involved in book club, being involved in beekeeping, a variety of things.

So, that sounds like as well as quite a busy work life, you've got quite a busy social or home life.

I like to have life that's full of variety. Sometimes it can feel like there's too many balls in the air, but on the whole I enjoy having the different inputs and also I think some of the interests like for example birdwatching or kayaking can be actually be quite peaceful pastimes.

So how long have you been involved in these sorts of activities?

I've been interested in nature since I was a child really, I think I've always been interested in being out and walking or cycling, I've done quite a lot of walking and camping at different stages of my life and I've certainly found sometimes when I've been suffering from stress that being out in green places has been helpful.

You mentioned that at an early age, does that mean that you did that with your parents, with friends, with a scout group, what was that about?

That was about doing it with my mother who was Norwegian and had been brought up doing a lot of that kind of foraging and so was confident for example about identifying wild mushrooms that kind of thing so, and also spending my summers as a child in Norway and picking blueberries and wild strawberries in the woods of the Oslo Fjord etc.

Have you any idea why that was, or even why that is, I'm not sure it still goes on?

I think from discussion with my Norwegian relatives, I think the Norwegians just lead a more outdoor life than the average British person and they are also in a country which is a large country with a small population so I think a combination of their laws allowing people to walk anywhere and the availability of countryside probably means it is a more common pastime

What do you mean by availability?

A lot of Norwegians have a townhouse and a summer house, even if that summer house is a shed so traditionally it was usual for a lot of the summer holidays with families to be spent out at the summer house at the weekends and school holidays traditionally Norwegian men would finish work at lunch time on a Friday and they would all rush off to their sheds by the beach

Do you think this is a class thing, I'm just wondering, there are people in this country that have second homes in the country side in national parks and people rail against them?

I think if you were wealthier as my aunt and uncle, your shed was a summer house that could sleep 20, but my other uncle who had very little money his shed was a shed without any toilets or showers or you know facilities so I think it was a pattern rather than a class thing

OK and can you say a little bit about your health?

My health at the moment?

Health history

Health history OK, I think I've generally been fairly fit and healthy probably until I was about 40. But I think after that there were a variety of things that fed into me feeling reasonably stressed and a bit overwhelmed with work situations so I started to feel a bit stressed and then from about 50 / 52 high blood pressure kicked in and then not long after that arthritis kicked in so I'm now in a situation where I know that I'm vulnerable to stress whether in a family or work situation and I've got what's likely to be a permanent problem with high blood pressure, and arthritis, including gout.

OK, you said that the stress started at work about your early 40s?

yes

what was the effect that that had?

I think I was suffering from stress from a work situation due to having a manager who was bullying me and at the time I was also very busy at the weekends with both my own son, 3 step children and a new partner so there was a lot going on. So I had some sort of breakdown which necessitated having some time off work and my immediate response was to get out into the countryside and go cycling and unhook my brain and simply drink in the green and that made me feel much better, simply not being at work made me feel much better

OK

But I think the exercise, and the ability to go out on my bike and not have to be back at a certain time and be able to go exploring a bit was good

OK and what did you do in addition to going for bike rides, anything? did you make any changes?

Immediately I didn't but although I did go back to work and then change my job it was fairly clear that something had happened which meant I was more susceptible to stress than I had been previously. So about that time I got involved in taking some classes in meditation. I found this extraordinarily difficult to start with because sitting still wasn't something I was accomplished at but with practice, through some emotional barriers, I did get to practice meditation more effectively and found that really helpful and through the connections at the meditation class I was then was introduced to some of the concepts of mindfulness.

OK you say some emotional barriers?

Some of the meditation was extremely difficult because when you are sitting there all kinds of things surfaced so there were some meditation sessions that involved weeping

Can you just say a little bit more about what kind of things surfaced.

I think if you were, I mean I can remember in particular one meditation session where I was extremely worried about one of my step daughters and by sitting still and moving into a meditation situation where sometimes thoughts flow in and out my concerns about her flowed in and kind of overflowed.

OK, Did that make any difference after the meditation, did you do things differently, did what had come up make you go away and do something, take some action as a result of your mediation or was it just that you sat there weeping?

The people that I was meditating with in a group did say to me not to worry that that was the kind of think that happened as part of mediation so I think the whole, all of the aspects of meditation in terms of stopping, being still, breathing, allowing thoughts to come and go, of all of the things that make meditation beneficial, but I wasn't at that early stage of learning to meditate understanding that, so I was finding

it very upsetting but I think with continued practice the mediation was more beneficial and I understood better how things worked

OK, so what was that continued practice, do you mean going back into the class, do you mean doing things yourself, can you explain more what you mean?

I think at that time I was going to regular classes so there was opportunity to meditate in sometimes largish groups that may be up to 30 people which created a nice atmosphere. I went to some events where there were more people than that mediating together and that was also a nice feeling but most commonly I was then developing if you like a practice of meditating several times a week, sometimes that might be 5 or 6 times a week, sometimes that might only be a couple of times a week, sometimes that might be on my own or with maybe up to 4 or 5 people but there has been a regular practice since then of meditating.

OK, you said that some of the classes introduced you, if you like going beyond mediation into mindfulness practice, what does that mean to you?

I think mindfulness is a tricky concept to grasp, so I think looking at the whole practice of being aware and noticing things takes considerable practice and in my case took considerable discussion as well, with lots of different people about how they saw this non-judgemental awareness actually working, how they used it, the whole idea of using mindfulness in your daily life, so we would discuss things like mindfully making a cup of tea or mindfully washing up or mindfully doing routine jobs that you might do in your daily life, so that you're not simply being mindful for half an hour and its not been actually part of how you live. But all of that took practice and really some time to embed without having to consciously think I need to be mindful but so that you're growing into the situation where you might try and be present a bit more and kind of live in the actual moment you're operating in and not always looking to the future or the past.

So you've had that experience?

Yes

Did you find it was making a difference in your daily life, your work at, whether it was at the university or whether it was at the charity you were working at or afterwards?

I think it is fairly clear that being mindful and actually operating now, in the present moment, is better than worrying about the future or worrying about how you might have done something better in the past. It isn't always easy to conjure up in a pressured work environment and sometimes the actual working environments weren't that helpful to some moments of quiet or some moments of thought. There's a lot of shared office space etc. I think I've learned more recently some other ways of embedding mindfulness into my daily life which have been more effective than perhaps they were early on.

OK, so can you say a bit more about that. What do you mean by more recently and how that effectiveness has been helped because obviously more recently you've also said you've developed other conditions you're having to work with. Your arthritis, your blood pressure and things?

Yes I think what I would do nowadays for example, because I'm now not living in Manchester, but living in the South Lakes and part of that reason for moving was spending more time in the outdoors and very immediately able to walk from the front door and find myself with lovely views within a couple of minutes and I'm now in a situation where I'm working in a garden, in a park and walking to work and I'm walking a dog. And I think even though I might find walking painful in terms of my arthritis by really walking with great awareness I'm able to not walk worrying about what I need to do next, what I need to do at work today etc but I'm able to walk looking at the sky, the clouds, the trees, the colours, listening to the bird song, looking

out for the birds, noticing flowers in different seasons, fruit in different seasons, which makes the walk more enjoyable, makes the walk more mindful and certainly distracts me from the pain of the arthritis

So do you think the benefit is purely one of distraction then?

No the benefit is also of appreciation, I think that if you are really appreciating what you see, what you hear, what you smell, the bigger view, the change of weather etc. If you are really aware of that, and you're really noticing that then you're getting much more enjoyment out of the differences in the day to day, the differences in the seasons, so the whole thing is both about noticing an awareness and appreciation as well as focusing your mind on something.

So you've mentioned the word enjoyment but you've also said appreciation. Can you say a little bit more about how it helps you appreciate, given that you are working with this illness, what are you appreciating, how is it, what does it mean to be able to appreciate other things?

I think if you're in considerable pain, so if I'm waking up and it is actually difficult to stand because of the level of pain, then there is a risk that you get taken up with that level of discomfort whereas I think if you are seeing that in the context of a much bigger, and more beautiful and engaging and interesting world then it is less important so you can value what you have on offer through nature and that counterbalances the difficulty if you weren't going out and having a walk and appreciating what was on offer but were staying at home and being in pain that would not be a very productive situation.

OK, what about if you just stayed at home and skyped your friends or watched tv would that not give you some enjoyment and give you some distraction from your pain?

Well I think something like tv is a very passive situation, I think maybe talking to a friend more distracting but I think there is a real value in that bigger view and that being part of a fabulous universe that you don't get by staying at home

OK. So you've said quite a bit about what your mindfulness practice involves, getting out there seeing things. You did do a number of years of meditation. Now you've just been taking part in this nature based mindfulness programme what has been the difference between what you've learned before and what you've done now if anything. Has there been a difference?

I think there has been a difference and I suppose in some ways what this has done is drawn together some of my earlier interest in nature and an interest in walking and camping etc. Together with some mindfulness which together has meant that I've been much more aware and noticing of for example cloud patterns or seasonal differences or temperature and weather and engaging all the senses with nature in a way that perhaps I was less inclined to do in the past. So by pulling all of these threads together for example I would be more likely to sit somewhere and simply enjoy the view and have the ability to sit quietly for 20 minutes doing so than I would have done in the past where I wouldn't have sat still for 2 minutes anywhere.

And does that make a difference?

It does make a difference because I think you look more carefully. So if you sit and really look at a view you can really notice what is there instead of simply saying that's a nice view but if you really sit and notice things then you can pick out colours, you can pick out, you know a kind of a mood of the weather that day. There are lots of places now where I go where I walk maybe once a week so you can notice changes from the week before as the seasons are moving on. You are much more appreciative of small natural, seasonal, weather, time of day type changes which is more enjoyable, more engaging, and there is a calmness about looking at a view in that

way, which I think is probably beneficial for someone who is inclined to suffer from both stress and high blood pressure.

OK, again you've said you are noticing quite a lot, so I'm wondering what is the difference between going out for a walk for 20 minutes or going and sitting in this place you've just mentioned for 20 minutes and sitting on a cushion in your home in front of a nice fire for 20 minutes. Is there a difference?

I think there is a difference I think there is something about connecting with the world, I mean I like sitting in front of a nice fire but it is essentially a closed in and cozy sort of situation even if you see patterns in the fire whereas I think going out opens up our opportunity, opens yourself up to engaging with the world. In a way that I've had a couple of experiences, once in the Dolomites, once in, near Whistler in Canada where you look at that 360 degree magnificent mountain view that you've got and you see that your such a small part of a big and wonderful world and that's sometimes a really helpful perspective as well as just the pleasure of seeing such a stupendous view.

I can see how that's all very relevant in terms of how you've described your life I'm wondering if some little old man had come along and done the nature based mindfulness course but he couldn't afford to go to these wonderful places or he didn't have transport or anything else, what would he have learned based on your experience?

Well, I think there are many people who can either engage with the seasons and with nature through a window box, or a bird feeder, or maybe a walk to a local park and sit on a park bench looking at the daffodils, or a pond or the blackberries or whatever it is. I think most people do have some access to a small piece of nature and there is something about that. It is the same as people who are involved in gardening who have a genuine empathy for nature. There is something about the patterns of the

seasons, the patience that is required in seeing things grow and seeing things change and enjoying the nature without being able to control it.

OK you're painting a picture that sounds great, big views, I'm wondering how that fits in to your mindfulness practice, how that fits in to your nature based mindfulness practice having an impact on daily life, if any?

Well I think it does because I walk daily, so you know, whether I am walking in a local park or walking on a local beach or even around the local streets, looking at people's gardens

So in terms of mindfulness in daily life how do you think A, mindfulness has an effect, what is the effect? B, does an involvement in nature in that mindfulness have an effect and what is it? How is your daily life because of what you do?

I think mindfulness itself has an effect because it helping you actually live today, or actually live you know in the present moment without necessarily being concerned about what is coming up and what is gone. We can spend too much time worrying about what we could have done and worrying and planning for the future and not living today. And I think there's an element of living today and being aware and noticing things about your life and making the best of that situation which is helpful. rather than constantly living behind or ahead of yourself.

So just to explore that a little more. Studying mindfulness, going to mindfulness classes, being trained, as obviously had an effect because you're using all the well known phrases like living in the moment but you've also described quite a hectic life, where you are doing lots at home, doing lots at work, so what I'm interested in is what difference is mindfulness making to that?

OK well for example I've had a situation at work where I felt you know I've got this list of things I should be doing, I haven't got these things that are coming up planned

and that's worrying me, and then I've kind of tried to sit back and think OK there's a better approach to this, why are you actually doing this and what are you meant to be doing today? What you are supposed to be doing is supporting and engaging with the other volunteers and making today an enjoyable and practically useful experience for the people who are involved in the volunteering programme. So don't think about all these other things that are coming up, engage with what you are doing today and make that an enjoyable and useful and relevant day, by helping other people to be appreciative of what they are doing, by feeling valued etc. So I think I've been applying those ideas of living now, not for tomorrow, by making the best use of each day, rather than spending everyday in a fog of worry because you haven't done what you should have done, which is very unproductive.

I suppose what I'm wondering, is you've had many years of management experience, many years of project experience and I'm wondering whether that experience and training that you've had would have had the same outcome as mindfulness. Why is mindfulness different to the prioritisation, handling your team well?

Because the project management would be about meeting targets, it would not be about a valuable experience today. Because that isn't something that is easily measured in terms of project targets. So I think you can manage your project and I have an admin day when I'm not working with individuals, but I can spend time on that day, you know putting plans in place for what is happening for the future and then what I'm trying to do is draw a line and then look at working with people and being appreciative and living in the moment with those relationships and those communications on the day. So I think the mindfulness has helped me to do that and to not only get more out of each day than I'm spending with the vulnerable volunteers myself, but also making sure that they get more out of that as well.

OK, so we are talking about the impact mindfulness has had on your daily life at work, how about any impact on your daily life outside work and again we're talking

about mindfulness before you started with the nature focused work. What had you noticed about mindfulness in general, you'd already had that 3 years or so where you were going to classes, did you find that was having an impact?

I think it is harder to see the impact at home. I think I could see the benefit of meditation but I think it is less clear to see the impact of mindfulness in the home situation without making reference to nature really. I can see that the real difference, I mean I suppose one of the examples would be enjoying gardening. I've got a small back yard and I enjoy gardening in that back yard at home in order for that to create an attractive space in the different seasons, not really winter but you know in spring summer and autumn as somewhere to enjoy the view from, what you're growing in various pots and to grow some food and herbs and things and to have somewhere nice to sit with a cup of coffee otherwise I think the mindfulness has been much more beneficial since I've linked it in with walking or kayaking but most commonly walking or bird watching and I think that links to the need to get more exercise to improve my health. So one of the ways of making going for a walk much more enjoyable is to walk mindfully and not walk if you like mindlessly and be bored but to really walk being aware and noticing through all of your senses what you are getting out of the walk.

OK you've mentioned through all of your senses, so obviously the nature based mindfulness work that we've been doing has been focusing on things like a sit spot, being aware of your senses. We've talked about going for walks, we've talked about connecting with nature. What differences do you feel those activities have had because in your earlier description I could have simply said why not just call it gardening in your back yard, rather than mindfulness practice, what's the difference?

I think the difference is because you are really looking at what you're planting, when you're growing herbs you are looking at the, at the fact that you can use that as fresh herbs for your cooking but also it smells lovely and you might sit with your coffee

and rub the herbs in the pot next to you so you can get that smell as you're sitting in the backyard having a drink.

But isn't that what a gardener would do, why is that a mindful, I mean it might be a mindful activity

Well I think a good gardener would be mindful without perhaps realising they were being mindful. If you looked at someone who worked as a contract gardener for the council I doubt if they ever garden in a mindful manner

laughs OK. So apart from the garden how else do you think mindfulness.... If someone was looking at you from outside they would see you, they'd know you've got a good job, you are involved in all these different activities, you've got children, would they be able to tell that you were being mindful? Or if they said to you how do you cope? How would you say that mindfulness and especially a nature based mindfulness programme helped you? If at all it did?

I think it does help and I think the important thing is that you have some time in your week to make sure that you're actually getting out and looking at the view, having a sit and looking at the view, going for a walk, appreciating the fact that you might be walking in Scotland and the seasons might be behind what the seasons are in Cumbria and you know you're really noticing those things I think a lot of people would probably say that I was very calm without seeing the ducks feet paddling and I think that the way you are able to maintain that calm is because you build into your week the opportunities to get out and go for a longer walk or go and do some bird watching or you know whatever

But again how would this in your perception how would this help if it was a week when you couldn't go out and do those things or if it was someone else who couldn't out and do those things. One of the people on the course that you've spent a lot of time with has had some quite serious illnesses and doesn't go out. So from

your perspective how are you able to do things differently, how is it helping your health?

Well I think for example I usually walk to work so even if I am working a lot, you know I've still got that walk to work, I've still got the walk with the dog even if it is a shorter walk. So I think what happens is if you're very busy your opportunities to be in nature, be mindful, noticing things feeling that benefit is squeezed but you still have the opportunity to do it. But if I were to work flat out for a couple of weeks without having any days of being able to go for a longer walk or to a bigger view I would notice it. I would see that has detrimental effect on my health and I do think you need to make some time in your schedule

So what is the difference in making that time and making time to sit on a cushion for ten minutes?

I think you need both. I think that sitting on the cushion is the meditation and I think that if you don't do that on a regular basis you'll notice that being missing too. So I think ideally you make time for some exercise in the outdoors with a nice smell of pine woods and the moss that you're walking on and the wind on your face or the sea crashing or whatever. But you have some time for sitting and mediating, some time for short walks to and from work, out and about with the dog and then ideally some days in the week when you can build in something which is a longer input and if you can get all of those things going then you have a better chance in my case of not having all the balls fall out of the air.

Ok. You've mentioned going for walks, you've mentioned painful feet, and your arthritis and gout. I'm wondering how that mindful walk helps you with your chronic illness, it sounds quite painful to me.

Well it is painful. I think probably your whole body and certainly your blood pressure benefits from being out and actually getting everything going and I think quite often if

you wake up and your feet are very painful or indeed if you've been awake in the night because your feet are very painful it can be a bit difficult to get going so if you didn't choose to go out and have a walk and you chose instead to sit down and put your feet up, and have a cup of tea and some painkillers and watch television, that wouldn't move on. But because you go and have an input from what you're seeing in terms of the natural world as well as getting your circulation going that moves you on.

Ok so we've been talking about mindfulness at work, mindfulness at home, we've talked about some activities, your going for a walk, your gardening, and I'm wondering if there is a difference between being very skilled at those activities and mindfulness. Because if I was your doctor I could be saying OK what would be good for your arthritis, your gout, is for you to get some exercise. Why would I be saying mindfulness as well, what is the difference? What would be the difference if I was your GP to say I want you to practice mindfulness with a nature based element and I want you to go do your garden.

I think if you're, if I'm being mindful then I am consciously noticing things and being aware of things and appreciating things so if I am planting plants in the pots in my back yard and I'm thinking about colour scheme or I'm thinking about you know kind of what might be good to attract these butterflies, I'm really being aware of what I'm doing, I'm noticing the end result of what I'm doing and how something works in harmony but I am thinking about that, I am doing that on purpose, I'm doing that intentionally and I think you can.. where I work the gardener is an organic gardener and she is very aware of gardening in harmony with nature and she is very aware of gardening in such a way as the volunteers will learn when they are gardening so you could argue that she is practicing mindful gardening because she is thinking about pollinators and the other gardeners but I'm not sure she is practicing personal mindfulness, not sure she is getting anything out of it in terms of her own noticing and awareness and appreciation for her own individual practice so

what makes you say that?

Because at the end of the day she is exhausted, she's completely drained in terms of you know trying to describe things in the right way for volunteers with learning difficulties, trying to explain to members of the public why we haven't taken all the seed heads off things etc. So she is answering questions and she's trying to present learning in an accessible way I don't know if she is having a mindful practice of her own in terms of her appreciation and noticing and enjoyment and awareness of the garden so at the end of the day she is really tired because she is giving and giving and not feeding her own situation. I think you can see this in... I mean I feel if I go for a walk for example that I'm noticing you know the colours and the feel of the wind and the birds that I'm seeing or maybe the behaviour of the birds, the colours if it is autumn and the colours changing etc. I think there are people who do outdoor activities who are not seeing nature at all, they are not noticing the birds or the trees or the colours or any of those things, so I might be trying to practice mindful kayaking, They are racing and where they are is almost irrelevant.

OK. So what do you think would be the impact of a mindfulness practice with a nature focus if you weren't living in Cumbria? You lived in Manchester, you've said about going for bike rides when you were feeling very stressed and you were able to get out for the day. But that was your nature connection it wasn't a mindfulness practice it was because you'd been brought up appreciating nature, from what you've said. Was there a difference between going for those bike rides then and what you do now?

I think there is a difference because I think I'm much more aware. So whereas I was getting out and getting the exercise and getting the fresh air and feeling that I was in a generally in a green environment, I think I was much less inclined to be carefully noticing what was there. To be appreciating things on a canvas that was about all of the senses or the temperature, or the seasons, or the weather. It was a much more general - go for a bike ride, it's nice green views, I've unhooked my brain and it's a break and I think there was less observation going on and less general awareness

going on and I think you enrich a walk or a paddle or whatever by having that higher level of noticing and awareness and observation and appreciation.

So a lot of this higher level of awareness is you being out. What about you being in and I don't mean being in a building or in your home I'm wondering what effect this is having inside you. If there is any, you might not be able to quantify that?

I think, it is a bit like, I don't know, I suppose I feel like I have some tools so I think that in order to manage my stress levels my blood pressure, my painful arthritic joints, there are things that I can do so I'm not a victim if you like there are things that I can do so that means that I can make the best of the situation that I have. My arthritis isn't going to go away so what I need to be doing is managing it in the best way that I know and some of that comes from looking at the whole mindfulness, mediation, interaction with nature, and building that into my weekly programme.

Just going back a little is that different to just standard mindfulness practice?

erm

or what you perceive of it having trained for three years

Yes.. I think it is because I think by involving nature you're enlarging your.. the world that you operate in, and you're giving yourself access to more that is natural and pleasurable and interesting so it becomes an additional resource for you. And I think if you don't do that, and for most people some nature is reasonably accessible, if you don't do that you are cutting yourself off from a really additional way of helping yourself.

OK. Where do you see this leading, does it lead anywhere?

What in general or for me?

For you

For me

How do you think this helps you with where you're at now, work wise, family wise?

Well I think what has evolved is a kind of, if you like a programme or a timetable that is a sensible way of spending time through the week. At the moment I'm working for the sake of argument 4 days a week and then having time to weave that around that whether it is small bits on the days that I'm working or and bigger chunks on the days that I'm not working. I suppose if I were to be more unwell I would probably need to work less and spend more time in using meditation and mindfulness and a more skilled approach to managing my health so the balance might change in the week if I became more unwell in order to operate at a level where you are enjoying life and doing your best to be as healthy as you can.

OK. And in terms of doing those things, you've already made some significant changes in your life, you've changed one job to another, you've then moved, your children have moved away, your job has changed, you've taken on other interests, do you think that mindfulness has helped you do those things? I'm aware as you are that there are people in the group that you've been working with on the programme that might not have had those opportunities to change and might have had different results. How much do you think your being able to take those steps has made a difference?

I think it is a little bit difficult to unravel the reasoning behind taking those steps from the other elements of your life. I think, I think I've been in a better financial situation than some people or I've had more support and I think one of the things about this is that it is easier to make these kinds of changes and build some practices into you life if you've got interest and support from your friends and family so I think none of the

children have thought mediating or you know all of these things have been daft things to do. There has been interest from the children and from and there's been a lot of support from my husband and interest from friends and other people who've got some idea about what mediation involves for example. So I think it is much more accessible to make these kind of changes to your life if you've got a generally supportive and encouraging environment in terms of friends and family. I think it is more difficult for some people if they're working within a very different personal environment as it were.

So why do you say that? Because you said that one of the things that's happened is that you've had the ability to make decisions at work and focus in that moment at work which made it very different to your experience as a project manager for example. What difference has it made to your ability to do that that isn't being seen elsewhere?

Well I suppose in the job I do now, or both the jobs I do now, I've got considerable autonomy. So I haven't got a manager sitting in the same room watching how I'm operating or watching how I'm spending my time so it is perhaps easier for me to, as long as I'm meeting certain objectives, it's easier for me to manage how I'm spending my time and that has varied from job to job. Some jobs I've had have been much more constrained with a more constrained timetable so for example in the past when I worked as a careers adviser you knew very well that for 4 months you were working with 8 interviews a day. So there wasn't much flexibility in the work environment whereas I've got much more flexibility now never mind the fact that I'm working in a garden and walking to work.

And again I'm wondering how much of that, it's a nature / nurture thing that I'm wondering. How much of the changes that you've made, you've mentioned being financially able to do it, you've mentioned support, I don't know from what you're saying how much you've been able to do because of the other things, how much

you've been able to do because of a mindfulness practice, how much you've been able to do so because you are you, and you've had ambition?

It's really difficult isn't it, I suppose, I suppose other people would have made other decisions because they would have been more motivated by having more money I've never been very motivated by money. I've had enough money, so the fact that I have changed jobs that have meant that I've then had jobs that have earned less are decisions other people may not have made. But I've made those decisions for other reasons about satisfaction and enjoyment and whatever. So I suppose what seems like enough money to me might not be enough money to someone else it's too difficult to unravel those. I think also the whole philosophy that I have been exposed to through the people that I've met through learning meditation and mindfulness etc. has been much more about living skilfully and living simply rather than living chasing status and ambition and you know financial riches. So all of these environments have perhaps helped me to make those choices.

So do you think those things have made a difference to how you view the future?

What the ideas around the philosophy and meditation and mindfulness?

yes

I'm sure that effects a positive view of the future despite having some chronic illness, because there seems to be things you can do about that. I think it is always easier to be positive if you feel you've have some control and some tools

And do you think you've got control or some control?

Yes definitely. While I don't expect to have my arthritis 'cured' I think that there are definitely things that I can do to make the situation more liveable with and maybe to improve it.

OK, so in terms of your daily life, your use of a nature based approach to mindfulness, how's life?

Life is excellent, you know I think that I can certainly see people that I know who have no chronic illness who are less positive about life because are concerned about all kinds of issues and because they feel that they have no control and no ability to manage the situation they are in.

OK thank you very much

C.4 - Crash Interview

So as I understand it some of the issues we are going to talk about link back to problems with anxiety when you started university and you were helped by that through sessions of counselling through your GP, is that through the first step programme?

Yes, that's correct, I only had about two or three sessions

OK, and then later on while you were at university you took part in a meditation programme?

Yep, that's right, I'm not really sure why I signed up to it.

So what sort of things did you learn on that programme?

I didn't really learn anything new as such as I had done a small amount of Buddhist meditation previously

OK

So it was mainly er... things like mindfulness of breathing and stuff like that

So you say you've done some Buddhist meditation previously, what was your interest there?

I suppose I've always had a bit of an interest in self-development in terms of er... not exactly spirituality but your ability to focus your mind, remain calm and things like that.

So can you just say a little bit more about the techniques used on this course.

You've talked about mindfulness of breathing, what else did you do?

I also did body scans.... Do you want me to explain that ..no?

No because we've done that as a standard part of the programme so that's OK

That's all I can really remember actually

Did you find the programme useful?

No

OK why... that was quite a precise answer, a very quick answer, why not?

Well I suppose it was mainly all stuff I'd done before

I imagine the fact that you were doing it as an eight week programme did they give you something to do in between each session?

We did get given a cd so we could practice the same exercises

And did you use that?

Once or twice but not very much

So how come you didn't engage with it then?

What do you mean by didn't engage with it?

Well it sounds like you did the sessions which were whatever.. two and a half hours each week, they gave you the cd which you used a couple of times, I would have thought they would have expected you to do something to fit it into your day to day life so that it had an impact and I'm interested in why you didn't engage with it in a way that made you think oh yes I must go meditate for half an hour everyday for example

I suppose I just never really felt that I needed to do that

So you have mentioned that you have a buddhist meditative background, you have some knowledge from that traditional view, have you practiced that on a regular basis or is it something that's there in you background?

No it's more in the background and it is though something that remains an interest but I just don't seem to get round to actually doing it.

So why not? I'm interested that you don't feel the need to. What do you have that helps you feel good? If it isn't those things?

Well I suppose I run and go climbing and kayaking and getting outdoors and these are all things which sort of divert your mind from the day to day stuff and give you more focus and ability to quieten everything else down in your mind.

So this idea of diverting your mind, what do you mean by diverting your mind?

Well I think lots of people most of the time have lots going on thinking about everything that happens in their day and concerns they have about different things like money or projects they have to do, things like that and I think for example if you are climbing and you're doing a lead climb you are just focused solely on what you're doing at that time you don't have all those other things in the background

Ok

And that's what I mean

Ok fine and so you've mentioned climbing, you've mentioned running, kayaking. This must form a big part of what you've got going on to actually be able to fit all those things in

Yes I suppose it does

Do you think that applies to your fellow students, do they all engage in things the same way?

No I'd say the majority of them don't do that, a reasonable, well less than half that engage in any kind of activity

Ok now does that make you in a minority or a majority in terms of people you know?

In terms of the people I know a minority, in terms of the people I spend time with it's normal, a majority

Can you say a bit more about that, what do you mean the people you spend time with?

Well I think when you do all these activities by default you spend time with people who also do them

So in choosing to spend your time that way do you think that benefits your health and wellbeing?

Well yes it's just a scientific fact that doing physical activity is good for you

But what about some of the other things that we've done for example, we've done things like sitting outdoors and noticing what's going on, we've just come back from some time spent bird watching obviously not as physically challenging as taking part in an adventure race but still being in nature, noticing things. Do you feel that's beneficial?

Yes it is beneficial and as well as the actual activity itself, looking at birds, identifying what they might be also getting that connection to the environment because you notice when it's windy or wet or whenever there's less birds and things like that. I think that kind of activity is also good because nowadays many people just expect instant gratification for everything, when you're doing an activity like that then you can't control what's happening and you've got to be patient and just see what happens and that I think is a good counter balance to that instant gratification.

Ok - Now we've also done things like we've gone for walks so one of the images that I've used on presentations is one of you sitting on a hill near whinlatter forest looking out over the view. Do you enjoy having that access to nature, do you enjoy being able to see those big views?

Yes

Do you think it makes a difference having that sort of view and access to it?

As opposed to what?

Well you spend Monday to Friday in a city, in Liverpool, do you feel better in the city or outdoors?

No definitely outdoors, but I think that is a sort of just natural state for any human being really because, humans are hunter gatherers, we're not really designed to live in concrete boxes.

Ok so are you saying this as an anthropologist or from your own personal interest?

Well both, from my own personal interest but as an anthropologist I can say it is a fact. Laughter

Ok so given that fact and what you've told me before about your family, you're the most active person in your family, where do you think that interest has come from? It has obviously started long before you went to university and became an anthropologist for example

Well that's a very good question and I suppose myself and siblings were exposed to a lot of outdoor activities and did a lot out in the countryside so I suppose that helped in terms of being normal. I suppose if as children we'd only ever been raised in a city and never been out to the countryside then it might have been bit of a shock to visit it and I suppose it was a good thing for it to be normal to be out in the elements.

So it was outdoor activities not that you were actually living in the outdoors?

No

I'm still thinking of what you said about you and your siblings had that exposure but your siblings aren't as active, what do you think engaged you more than them?

Well I suppose it helped that I studied outdoor education at college

Right

And that was partly by accident, well actually entirely by accident because I didn't get the grades to do what I'd originally intended and so by chance ended up on that course and really enjoyed it

Right

And then after joining the navy did get some experience of living outside in a variety of conditions so I think it was more.. I think doing that in the navy sort of made it more in my comfort zone, sleeping on the floor, under the stars and stuff.

So when you talk about been in the navy this doesn't sound like you're talking about being on a ship so can you say a little bit more about your experience

*sleeping under the stars isn't what comes to mind when I think of being in the navy
I tend to think of being on a ship sharing bunkbeds*

No well I spent quite a bit of time with the royal marines both at the commando training centre in Devon and on exercises with young officers and such and in Afghanistan so yes never really on a ship

So it sounds like for you having this contact with the outdoors is pretty normal?

Yes

Whereas the meditations and things that you were taught which might often be seen as sitting indoors aren't normal, do you combine the two?

Well I'm glad you asked that question, I just wanted to add that sometimes I think especially with trail running if you are running not slow but at a comfortable pace for example through a mountainous area sometimes I think it is a bit like moving meditation

Ok

In that sort of just with foot placement and your breathing just sort of in the moment and I suppose also enjoying yourself

Great, so in terms of that being in the moment do you find you're more in the moment from your perspective in those situations than you would be say sat behind a desk in Liverpool?

Completely, yes

Why completely, cos from what you've told me you've had good grades and things so you are obviously engaging with your course your study so there's got to be an element of mindfulness about your study. I'm interested in the mindfulness in that part of your life that's outdoors.

Well I suppose it all mixes in really with what I mentioned before about it being more natural to be outdoors and also the whole thing with instant gratification. When you're in that kind of environment say behind a desk and you've got multiple things

you are trying to focus on, where you've got to be, things like that, air conditioning it's a sort of physically comfortable environment but mentally not, whereas when you go outside it's a bit of a reverse sometimes the more physically uncomfortable you get mentally the better you feel.

Ok that's interesting, is it possible to say a little bit more about that, in terms of how you personally feel better mentally by being outdoors and connected with nature?

I suppose it's just sort of less stressful environment in a strange way because while you feel less stressed by all those artificial things that go on when you're sat behind a desk, when you're on top of a mountain and the winds blowing it's also a lot more dangerous than when you're sat behind a desk

Yep

But it's a lot more exhilarating and you just feel a better sense of freedom I suppose

Ok

And I think sometimes when you're just doing that repetitive 9-5 thing behind a desk in a city you're alive but you're not really living

Ok so we've got that you think it is normal to be connected with nature, we've got this idea of being alive but not really living and you've talked about a moving meditation your trail running, I get the impression that you think it's really important to have that natural connection so I'm wondering how critical it is for you to have that in your mindfulness practice it seems as if practicing mindfulness sitting on a cushion doesn't really work for you?

I think practicing mindfulness in that context is maybe a bit flawed because it sort of suggests that you'll practice mindfulness and then you'll go off and you won't be practicing anymore, whereas I think if you actually want to do it properly it's something you apply in your entire life

Ok, how do you apply it in your entire life?

I don't actually try to..

So do you think you should?

I suppose it's good to be mindful of things but it's not something I actively think about that much

Is that because you think you're being mindful in your day to day activity anyway?

Are you talking about any particular aspect?

Well, in terms of your interest in the outdoors, your belief in mindfulness being an everyday part of your life, and about it being normal to be involved in nature, what impact does do you think that sort of belief, that sort of attitude has on your day to day life, your getting on with living?

Well I suppose it does effect the choices you make in terms of what you choose to do with your spare time and where you see yourself, the kind of jobs you apply for and I suppose the things that matter to you whether that's eating well or caring about the environment whatever I suppose that's all something that is moulded by that interest in mindfulness and connection with nature.

Ok so you mentioned the environment there, is protecting the environment part of your beliefs, is that important?

I'm not sure it is a belief I think people should act responsibly instead of short term quick fixes that will make money.

So in terms of your personal practice if you like, getting outdoors, being mindful, the effect it has on you, how would you say your practice was right now?

It's reasonably good but it is probably about to undergo significant change graduating quite soon and then starting a whole new chapter I suppose

Ok so in starting that chapter does this being mindful of your own feelings, emotions, being aware of your own physical needs, involving nature in your experience, does that all lead to looking at the choices you make when you graduate?

Yes I think it has shaped my choices in terms of wanting to do something that would allow me to do the things I like now and also maybe have a positive contribution in terms of environmental issues and biodiversity so for example I'd rather work for the forestry commission than Lloyds bank or something like that

Ok and what about in terms of how it defines your life and your lifestyle for example some people would want to have a house of a certain size and TV screen of a certain size, a bmw in the drive and these all could all be perfectly fine as aspirations, what are your aspirations?

I suppose my main aspirations are to have somewhere to sleep that has a roof, and erm.. I suppose enough money to survive but mainly just the opportunity to get outdoors, to run, swim and bike ride and stuff

OK, but everything seems pretty good right now?

Well yes I suppose so

Ok thank you

Appendix D - Reflection and Discussion

Throughout the programme, participants were encouraged to reflect on their practice, on their participation in group activities and on their lives, their experiences and if and how things may be changing.

In the early stages of the programme, prior to keeping the more detailed journals referred to in Appendix A, some participants chose to start by keeping a daily journal that prompted them to recognise the difference between thoughts, feelings, emotions and to reflect on events, practice and expectations examples of these daily journals follow C1,2 & 3.

In addition, participants could choose to be recorded reflecting on their joint participation in an activity. An edited transcript of a discussion is included at C.4

C.5 Contains images both photographic and drawn produced by participants as part of reflection at their sit spot .

D.1 - Sample Daily Journal Greta

Everyday Mindfulness - Journal

Greta

Day 12/10/13		
Expectation	Visit Ulverston Market & Carmel.	
Initial response	Don't know Carmel well - should be an interesting day	
Reflection	Enjoyable, distracting, worthy of more exploration	
Meditation	Duration	Reflection
5 mins sitting	5m	Restful stop after dog walk.
10 breathing anchor	10m	Good spacious feelings.
5m mindfulness of B.	5m	Good setting to sleep.
Mindful Activity		
Visiting Carmel. History.	30m	focused on historical context - awesome
Walk up Gill	1 hour	focused on stream/views/trees.
Sense Awareness		
Sense	Reflection	
Sight Space in Ploom.	impressive, mellow stone, ancient carving - thinking of people language.	
Sound "Horns clapping"	A sense of excitement and power and beauty about a resource.	
Touch clothes in shop.	Beautiful vivid and textured clothes. in Carmel Shop.	
Taste Bacon legs mushrooms	Delicious	
Smell leafy.	Should walk up Gill Banks more often.	
Thoughts, Feelings, Emotions		
Green journey, relief at not getting lost, happy about trip, enjoyable walk - funny watching dog in stream. Linda enjoyed views.		
Reflection	Good day - meditations felt like like oases - need to do more - love vivid clothes colours. - enjoyed fresh air	
Tomorrow's Plan		
Walk museum.		
Reflection	Looking forward.	

D.2 - Sample Daily Journal Maggie

Everyday Mindfulness - Journal

Maggie

Day 3		
Expectation	Meditation at Priory Beach Lanark shanty Museum	
Initial response	Pleasure. Uplifting	
Reflection	Calmness. The right to exist.	
Meditation	Duration	Reflection
'Sit Spot'	5 mins	Still sea, land birds, oyster catches; trees rustling
Mindfulness of breathing	20 mins	Achievement to sit for 20 mins & keep breathe. Felt I was missing sensations.
Body Scan	12 mins	Some of it felt as if it worked better.
Mindful Activity		
Scanning hills, coastline, sky	15 mins	Everchanging but infinitesimal.
Washing up	10 mins	Concentration
Packing	3 mins	End of holiday.
Sense Awareness		
Sense	Reflection	
Sight Beach	Best meditation so far for reflection	
Sound Museum	Historic, childhood memories, laughter	
Touch Trees	How age is immaterial in comparison to Nature	
Taste Soup	warm and inviting as is the friendship Kin & I share	
Smell Priory Wood	Smell of autumn in crumpled leaves & damp ground is nostalgic	
Thoughts, Feelings, Emotions		
Friendship has given me the feelings of wellbeing How precious life is. Nostalgia of a bygone age.		
Reflection Enjoy every moment - value friends. Take nothing for granted. Our history is who we are.		
Tomorrow's Plan		
Go home & see my family. Attend a Memorial service		
Reflection		
Holidays give you the ability to appreciate what you have Life is short!		

D.3 - Sample Daily Journal Barbara

Everyday Mindfulness - Journal

Day			Wed
Expectation	Meet Steve ~ Go to Preston with Keir (shopping)		
Initial response	Need to pace myself as busy day (speak with K)		
Reflection	Pair, day will be ruined		
Meditation	Duration	Reflection	
body scan	30 mins	heart beats fast, gradually slows	
Mindful	5 mins.	down with the breath.	
Movements		Make body move more easily.	
Mindful Activity			
Meet Steve	3/4 hr	Consider being more assertive (communicate)	
Spend time with Keir	3 hrs.	Enjoy + appreciate spending time with him ~ he's excited about going travelling	
Sense Awareness			(pleased for him)
Sense	Reflection		
Sight	- busy city ~ intimidated by busy place, cars, traffic.		
Sound	- ambulance siren ~ thoughts about who might be injured		
Touch	- dressing gown - so warm + cosy - on return home.		
Taste	- lunch @ Subway - lovely roasted chicken		
Smell	- bread ~ nice warm roll.		
Thoughts, Feelings, Emotions			
Enjoyed my time spent with Keir - he is such a patient considerate person - offered to carry my bags, offered to do things for me so I didn't have to walk too far.			
Reflection	Enjoyable day. Busy though so will have a quiet one tomorrow!		
Tomorrow's Plan			
Osteopath Appointment, met lunch for lunch			
Reflection	Make lunch nearby so don't have to travel too far.		

Barbara



D.4 - Greta and Maggie Discussion

G. If you weren't well, did you do any meditation or anything like that to kind of help with that?

M. I did, when I first started, not... I had been doing meditation, from coming in June I'd been quite positive about things and using the meditation programmes. I preferred to do things lying on the bed because meditating downstairs I didn't find easy at all. Even though I was unlikely to be interrupted, I felt that downstairs I was exposed maybe and upstairs was my private space, my bedroom, my space.

G. I think.... I don't have any doubt at all that meditation works for me, I just need to do it more often. So I think if I'm feeling stressed by feeling unwell, family, or work or whatever. If I can sit and meditate for half an hour it definitely makes me feel less as if I'm rushing about and a bit less pressured.

M. Well that makes me want to ask you a question, because when I became ill I ended up in hospital and really was so medicated that I was barely conscious half the time so the thought of meditation to make me feel better never even entered my head because I was on some other planet. Did you meditate more or again because you were feeling so rotten did it not occur to you as a means of helping?

G. I did do some meditation, again probably could have done with more, but I think also one of the things that makes me feel better in that situation is going out somewhere and just going for a stroll.

M. But wasn't there a stage when you felt so ill you were beyond going out?

G. No, I've had one day off work.

M. I've... I had the usual very well meaning advice from my kids. When I suddenly started putting outdoor stuff on and Ross said where are you going? I said I'm going for a walk and he said it is far too cold and you're not well enough. I said I'm convinced I'll feel more well if I do that. And he promptly rang his sister, cos they like to do the ganging up bit. He walked round the reservoirs with me, albeit extremely slowly on my behalf and it was freezing. We got home and had a cup of tea and I slept for hours which for me meant it had done exactly what I wanted it to do.

G. So why did walking round the reservoir make you feel better do you think?

M. Because we were surrounded by hills and as you know I love hills. They are quite dramatic. They are stark and grey and they are quite menacing looking and it's quite an isolated area. But I'd had weeks and weeks and weeks of being in a hospital bed, coming home and with all good intentions being cared for to the point of suffocation and that sounds very selfish but there just came a point when I needed to go out.

G. I think you just need some fresh and you need a change of scene. One of the things I've been doing over the winter, the autumn and winter months is doing some work on some beaches.

M. With work?

G. No, no nothing to do with with work, and it's just quite nice to go to a beach and because you're doing litter picking or something you notice what's there so you're very aware of both what shouldn't be there and what is there if you see what I mean. I think when you go to a range of beaches with a bit of a purpose and a group of people it is quite sociable and that was really good.

M. Well I think you're right I think it was that I needed the fresh air but I needed to feel, I needed to feel health wise that I was getting somewhere. That I was capable of going out even if it was cold, even if it was windy, even if my hands froze. That I

could do that again and not become the invalid that with all good intentions Ross sometimes makes me feel. He does it for the right reasons, he does it because he gets frightened.

G. It's debatable whether that's the right reason. He's doing it because it suits him better to keep you where he can see you.

M. Well possibly.

G. It's not because actually you would feel better. So if you would feel better if you go out and you know have a nice big view rather than being stuck at home in the lounge, you don't want to sit and watch television you'd rather go out and have a good view and see the weather or feel bit of the weather and then I think if you're not very well even if it is a short walk, a bit of exercise and good views will mean you get a decent nights sleep.

M. Well it is the same argument but not just from Ross but from both of them, when I said in the new year I'm now going back to my volunteering, both at Emmaus and at the Reporter and Alison was saying well can you start off just doing a half day with Joan saying the same. Which I think I did for one week and then thought no not really. At the same time on the days that I was at home it was a mixture. I found I was doing rough plans of what I would do in the garden. Not on changing the garden but when the weather improves I will go and weed that border first and then I will... whatever. And spending time with the baby of course, adds to my wellbeing.

G. I suppose its about being, it's about being in the now isn't it? Very young children aren't thinking about what they are doing tomorrow are they? They are just enjoying now, whatever that is whether it is going to feed the ducks or being in the paddling pool whatever that is.

M. I think some of it is that wonderment and some of it is probably selfishly that they need you. I'm having to look after somebody who is dependent on me and that is a state that I loved. That is a state that as my own children and grand children grew up, goes doesn't it, because they quite rightly become independent. I like to be needed. I've always liked to be needed.

G. I think there is something about just enjoying what you are doing now because I think as adults we spend a lot of time thinking about the past and looking into the future.

M. We do

G. And rather than just enjoying today, enjoying your cup of tea, or enjoying your walk or enjoying whatever.

M. No. But if you take it back round to nature, to me just gives me hope. It makes me feel. It makes me feel summers coming, it makes me feel good. I like the colour. Going round the wood today and saying to you oh look at that decaying old log, a fantastic shape. I probably notice nature more when I come here, because I do more when I come here. The hills are over the road. It never occurs to me.

G. Why not?

M. Because I'm still going over roads and thinking of myself in at least a semi-urban environment. Coming here is pure coast and country and.. discovery. But it's... it's how you view it, I mean if we are thinking about things to do with mindfulness and wellbeing, wellbeing because I'm still not quite sure what mindfulness itself is. I understand wellbeing. It's the Lake District, it's the lambs in the field and there aren't any of those within walking distance of me. It's the lambs in the field, it's the kind of trips that we do. It's knowing that we'll go to the Priory (*Maggie's sit spot*) more than anything. So I look forward to it but it must *be* very obvious to them. Cos they know I

look forward to it but they know I'm better when I go home, so that's wellbeing, if it's mindfulness I don't know cos mindfulness is being aware isn't it? But that is an awareness I think.

G. Yes, it's also about living today rather than living in the past and the future I think. About enjoying each day....

M. Yes

G. As you go along, and I think that is important, it's do I walk to work looking at the cloud formation and the sky and what birds are in the trees or do I walk to work thinking about what I've got to do today? So it's.. if I'm mindful then I'm looking, and I'm actually enjoying my walk to work and I'm looking around me and really noticing things. If I'm just walking up to work without seeing it and just thinking about a list of jobs then that's not mindful.

M. Well, that's interesting, because when we went to the beach at the Priory and as usual I mentioned cloud formations didn't I, and said no matter how much I tried you can never capture that on camera, well I can't. I do that at home but not everyday. If I've gone to open the bedroom curtains on a lovely summers day, yes I can do that at home. But most times when I go out the door I'm already thinking... well this is what I'm doing and that is what I intend and this is where I'm going and I'd say 90% of the time or more when I leave the house I'm very intent on what I'm doing and where I'm going and not..

G. So do you think you'd feel better if you actually stopped doing that

M. Yes I'm just not sure how.

G. Look to think Ok I'm walking up here to the bus stop or whatever, you know, which trees have got their leaves on now and you know what are the flowers looking

like in everyone else's garden I'm walking past can I hear the birds singing and what's the temperature like and is it a blue sky and really looking. Because there is nature everywhere and I think...

M. And I suppose cos I pride myself on multi-tasking I should be able to do both

G. Well you should be not thinking about the other stuff but actually if you are walking somewhere you should be enjoying your walk maybe rather than thinking about what you are going to do in an hour.

M. The thing I am very good at noticing, the row of trees along the front of my row of houses, there is a cherry blossom and an oak tree and I don't know what the others are but they all flower at different times. I always look for the cherry blossom a couple of doors down coming out. And I do notice those trees. But I tend to walk with my head slightly down, very much focusing on where I'm going or what I'm doing when I get there and I again...

G. I think you get more out of it if you actually lift your head up and look because pretty much wherever you are there's going to be an interesting sky and there's going to be some trees and birds and things to look at as you go.

M. But again if you do it consciously is that any good?

G. Yes you're noticing. You're consciously making the most out of your 20 minute walk or whatever it is you're doing.

M. When I get back I will be at this stage of doing the garden. And again that makes me feel good. But that's because I like forward planning I'm not very good at today. I like to know what I'm doing next week or the week after with you know with a few bits in between.

G. I don't think you have to not plan, if you actually make the most of each day, by trying to actually live in it, then when you start to look back you've got lots of nice days to look back on haven't you. Whereas if you spend all your time worrying about the future then you might not make the best out of the day you're in and you're not going to get it again are you?

M. No

G. I think it is interesting listening to you that you very specifically said you understand wellbeing you don't understand mindfulness, you said about how Theo responds... So he's not noticing anything other than what is there. And when you're with him you're not forward planning, you're not thinking of what next, you're totally absorbed by him, you are in that moment.

M. I am yes

G. So you can be totally in the moment

M. Ok

G. You are being totally attentive, totally aware, of everything about him and how it makes you feel. So what are you doing when he is not there? You're are going straight back into normal as you put it multi-tasking mode, do this, do that, think about what's coming next instead of just appreciating..

M. I've moved away from a lot of things that used to make me stressed because after being so ill I decided I had to do that nobody was going to do it other than me

G. There is something about trying to find things that make you feel a bit calmer I don't know I think you did that sense awareness table as well and I certainly found

when I started to think about what was on there that some of the things that made me feel better were some of the things like being outside.

M. Absolutely

G. You know and you walk along the canal and you're looking for the cormorants, the swans, the swans that are growing up and I think that because I walk along there quite regularly and you're really noticing what's there so at different times of the year you're got waxwings in the bushes or you've got baby swans, all of these things. You get a sense of the seasons and you've got something to look at that takes your mind off stuff so thats.. and sounds, birdsong and the waves crashing

M. Absolutely

G. So I don't know what you think about that?

M. Waves crashing definitely, just watching the surf on the water and the feel of the sea. For me the first flowers in the spring when I stand for hours watching snowdrops and crocuses. All the things that are the signs of spring. Being out in the garden and just wondering how these flowers have survived winter just gives you a sense of purpose in the fact that life cycles carry on. But like you being on a beach, a deserted beach, gives me a sense of calmness, I suppose reflection really.

G. And you've always said how much you've enjoyed going for a drive in the country and looking at all the different shades of green

M. I don't think enough people take notice.. that you... where I live you can drive up into the pennines and you can look to your right and there will be ten different shades of green.... I go and look because again it calms me down and I find, I try to find things to keep me calm and make me positive, because ill health takes that away from

you and you have to reinvent yourself and in my case that is doing rather than thinking.

G. I think it is like a lot of things, it's like back to that sense awareness table there's lots of things on there that you like that are like you know the cracking of the fire,

M. Absolutely

G. The warm fire, the smell of fresh bread

M. Baking for me

G. Mown grass

M. Absolutely

G. You know that seaside smell as you walk along the beach. All of these things, in general.. are not expensive things, you're not talking about a ski holiday are you? so a lot of things that make you feel better are to do with nature or simple activities or being outdoors looking at scenery

M. Absolutely

G. So what would you say was your favourite place

M. The beach at the priory

G. Right. So why?

M. Just the fact that you go through a wood straight onto a beach. Its secluded, the view is absolutely breathtaking. And you can walk miles and in my case not realise

that you've walked miles, because you're just strolling along and having a chat. And then you look back and realise how far you've come. Which you can then think back and realise how far you've come in life.

G. In parts of my life when I've been particularly stressed nature certainly played a part.

M. Absolutely

G. When I had a nervous breakdown when I worked at the University years ago I spent a lot of time when I was off from work cycling around in the kind of.. the local green areas, mersey valley it was.. that sort of area and I used to feel I was cycling along and somehow I would put my mind into some kind of a neutral and I felt like green was coming in through my eyes and somehow that greenness was a really a calming colour and sometimes if I spent an hour or two cycling about in a pleasant environment around the water park or through the trees and everything, all this greenness somehow some problems would kind of have shaken out in my head

M. Absolutely

G. And I'd come to a conclusion without even thinking consciously so I think that was beneficial.

D.5 - Images of sit spots

D.5.1 Looking towards the Coniston Fells



D.5.2 Canal Foot



D.5.3 Overlooking Tarn Hows



D.5.4 Looking towards Holy Island



D.5.5 Sit spot near Milnthorpe



D.5.6 A smaller sit spot, the back yard



Appendix E1 - Standard Mindfulness For Health (MFH) Course Key Concepts

Week 1

1. Mindfulness
2. Primary and Secondary Suffering
3. Breath Awareness

Week 2

4. Blocking and Drowning
5. Doing and Being Modes

Week 3

6. Boom and Bust Cycles
7. Hard and Soft Edges
8. Pacing and Baselines

Week 4

9. Resistance and Acceptance

Week 5

10. The Bigger Container
11. Negative Bias and The Treasure of Pleasure

Week 6

12. The Three Emotional Regulatory Systems
13. Loving-Kindness

Week 7

14. Turning Outwards
15. Cultivating kindness

Week 8

16. Focused Awareness
17. Open Monitoring

Appendix E2 - UK Mindfulness Teacher

Guidelines

A teacher of mindfulness-based approaches should have the following:

E.1.1 Mindfulness Based Teacher Training

1. Familiarity through personal participation with the mindfulness-based course curriculum that they will be learning to teach, with particular in-depth personal experience of all the core meditation practices of this mindfulness-based programme.
2. Completion of an in-depth, rigorous mindfulness-based teacher training programme or supervised pathway over a minimum duration of 12 months.

E.1.2 Requirements in addition to mindfulness-based teacher training

1. A professional qualification in mental or physical health care, education or social care, or equivalent life experience, recognized by the organization or context within which the teaching will take place.
2. Knowledge and experience of the populations that the mindfulness-based course will be delivered to, including experience of teaching, therapeutic or other care provision with groups and/or individuals, unless such knowledge and experience is provided to an adequate level by the mindfulness-based teacher training itself. An exception to this can be when teaching with the help of a colleague who knows well the population to whom the course will be delivered and has a relevant qualification. They would also need to have an understanding of mindfulness-based approaches.
3. If delivering MBCT, knowledge of relevant underlying psychological processes, associated research and evidence-based practice, unless these are provided to an adequate level by the mindfulness teacher training programme.

4. If delivering MBCT or other mindfulness-based course with a clinical population, an appropriate professional clinical training.

E.1.3 Ongoing Good Practice Requirements

1. Commitment to a personal mindfulness practice through
 - 1.1. daily formal and informal practice
 - 1.2. participation in annual residential teacher-led mindfulness meditation retreats
2. Engagement in processes which continue to develop mindfulness-based teaching practice
 - 2.1. ongoing contacts with other mindfulness practitioners and teachers, built and maintained as a means to share experiences and learn collaboratively
3. regular supervision with an experienced mindfulness-based teacher including:
 - 3.1. opportunity to reflect on/inquire into personal process in relation to personal mindfulness practice and mindfulness-based teaching practice
 - 3.2. receiving periodic feedback on teaching through video recordings, supervisor
 - 3.3. sitting in on teaching sessions or co-teaching with reciprocal feedback.
4. A commitment to ongoing development as a teacher through further training, keeping up to date with the evidence base, recording and reflecting on teaching sessions, participation in webs forums etc.
5. Adherence to the ethical framework appropriate to the teacher's professional background and working context.

Appendix F - John Muir Award

The John Muir Award is an environmental award scheme which although focused primarily on wild places, actually encourages people of all ages to explore and connect with their own locality, discover and enjoy aspects of nature they weren't aware of and then learn more about them, in effect practicing nature based mindfulness. In becoming aware and connecting with whatever is noticed people also learn to care and protect their environment. The award is administered by the John Muir Trust and international charity devoted to a world where wild places are protected, enhanced, and valued by and for everyone. The award promotes educational, social and environmental activity and so is an ideal partner to nature based mindfulness programmes.

In this research programme two participants used the four stages of the award

- discover
- explore
- conserve
- share

to deepen their nature based mindfulness practice, Greta exploring beach environments, Crash visiting local woodlands.



Appendix G1 - Sample Pilot Study Questionnaires

G.1.1 Sample Connectedness to Nature Scale Questionnaire

Please answer each of these questions in terms of the way you generally feel . There are no right or wrong answers. Using the following scale, in the space provided next to each question simply state as honestly and candidly as you can what you are presently experiencing.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree		Neutral		Strongly agree

- ___ 1. I often feel a sense of oneness with the natural world around me.
- ___ 2. I think of the natural world as a community to which I belong.
- ___ 3. I recognise and appreciate the intelligence of other living organisms.
- ___ 4. I often feel disconnected from nature.
- ___ 5. When I think of my life, I imagine myself to be part of a larger cyclical process of living.
- ___ 6. I often feel a kinship with animals and plants.
- ___ 7. I feel as though I belong to the Earth as equally as it belongs to me.
- ___ 8. I have a deep understanding of how my actions affect the natural world.
- ___ 9. I often feel part of the web of life.
- ___ 10. I feel that all inhabitants of Earth, human, and nonhuman, share a common 'life force'.
- ___ 11. Like a tree can be part of a forest, I feel embedded within the broader natural world.
- ___ 12. When I think of my place on Earth, I consider myself to be a top member of a hierarchy that exists in nature.
- ___ 13. I often feel like I am only a small part of the natural world around me, and that I am no more important than the grass on the ground or the birds in the trees.
- ___ 14. My personal welfare is independent of the welfare of the natural world.

G.1.2 Sample 5-Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire

Please rate each of the following statements using the scale below. Write the number in the space provided that best describes your own opinion of what is generally true for you.

1	2	3	4	5
never or very rarely true	rarely true	sometimes true	often true	very often or always true

- _____ 1. When I'm walking, I deliberately notice the sensations of my body moving.
- _____ 2. I'm good at finding words to describe my feelings.
- _____ 3. I criticise myself for having irrational or inappropriate emotions.
- _____ 4. I recognise my feelings and emotions without having to react to them.
- _____ 5. When I do things, my mind wanders off and I'm easily distracted.
- _____ 6. When I take a shower or bath, I stay alert to the sensations of water on my body.
- _____ 7. I can easily put my beliefs, opinions, and expectations into words.
- _____ 8. I don't pay attention to what I'm doing because I'm daydreaming, worrying, or otherwise distracted.
- _____ 9. I watch my feelings without getting lost in them.
- _____ 10. I tell myself I shouldn't be feeling the way I'm feeling.
- _____ 11. I notice how foods and drinks affect my thoughts, bodily sensations, and emotions.
- _____ 12. It's hard for me to find the words to describe what I'm thinking.
- _____ 13. I am easily distracted.
- _____ 14. I believe some of my thoughts are abnormal or bad and I shouldn't think that way.
- _____ 15. I pay attention to sensations, such as the wind in my hair or sun on my face.
- _____ 16. I have trouble thinking of the right words to express how I feel about things
- _____ 17. I make judgments about whether my thoughts are good or bad.
- _____ 18. I find it difficult to stay focused on what's happening in the present.
- _____ 19. When I have distressing thoughts or images, I "step back" and am aware of the thought or image without getting taken over by it.
- _____ 20. I pay attention to sounds, such as clocks ticking, birds chirping, or cars passing.
- _____ 21. In difficult situations, I can pause without immediately reacting.
- _____ 22. When I have a sensation in my body, it's difficult for me to describe it because I can't
find the right words.

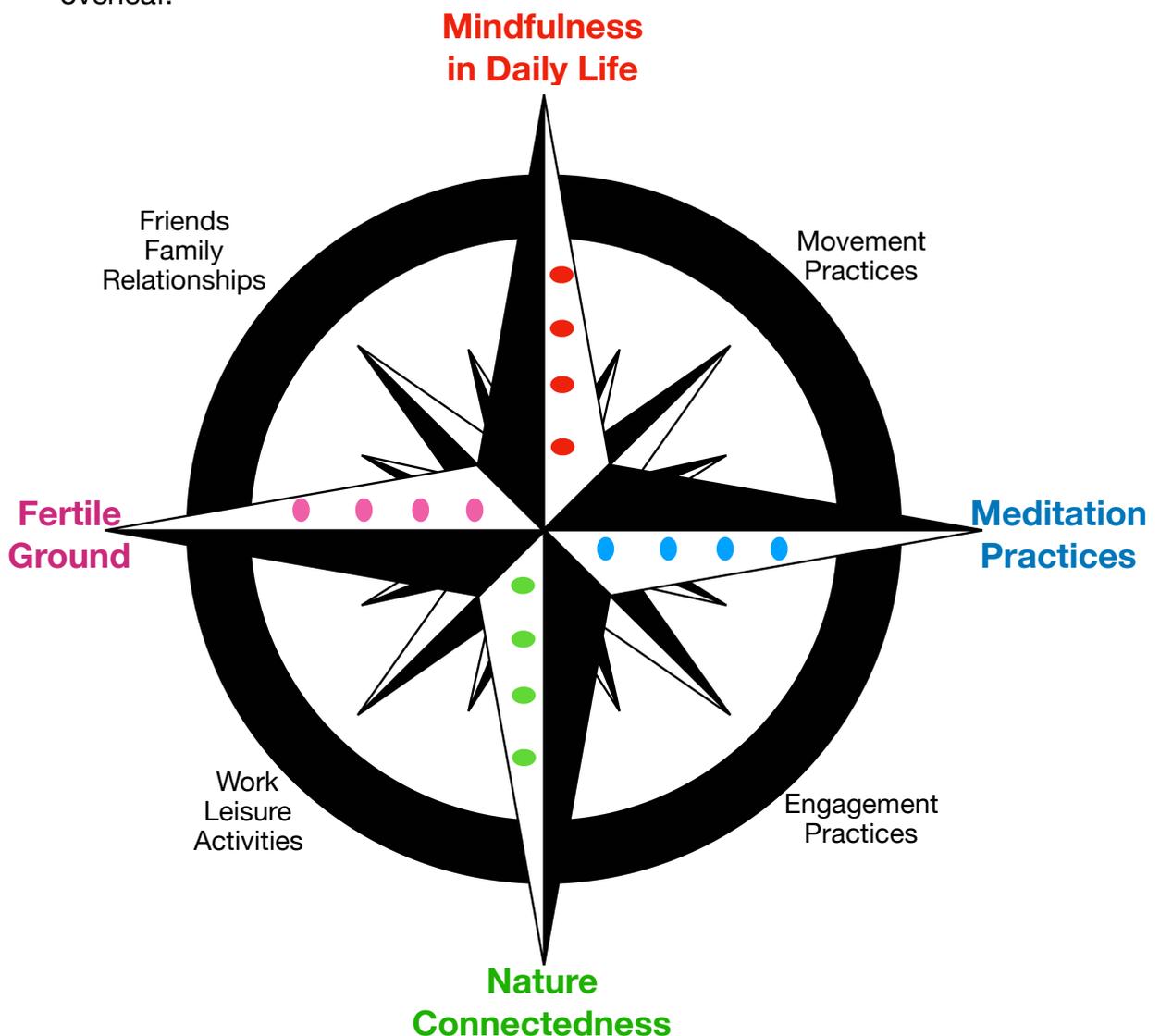
PLEASE TURN OVER 

1	2	3	4	5
never or very rarely true	rarely true	sometimes true	often true	very often or always true

- _____ 23. It seems I am “running on automatic” without much awareness of what I’m doing.
- _____ 24. When I have distressing thoughts or images, I feel calm soon after.
- _____ 25. I tell myself that I shouldn’t be thinking the way I’m thinking.
- _____ 26. I notice the smells and aromas of things.
- _____ 27. Even when I’m feeling terribly upset, I can find a way to put it into words.
- _____ 28. I rush through activities without being really attentive to them.
- _____ 29. When I have distressing thoughts or images I am able just to notice them without reacting.
- _____ 30. I think some of my emotions are bad or inappropriate and I shouldn’t feel them.
- _____ 31. I notice visual elements in art or nature, such as colors, shapes, textures, or patterns of light and shadow.
- _____ 32. My natural tendency is to put my experiences into words.
- _____ 33. When I have distressing thoughts or images, I just notice them and let them go.
- _____ 34. I do jobs or tasks automatically without being aware of what I’m doing.
- _____ 35. When I have distressing thoughts or images, I judge myself as good or bad, depending what the thought/image is about.
- _____ 36. I pay attention to how my emotions affect my thoughts and behavior.
- _____ 37. I can usually describe how I feel at the moment in considerable detail.
- _____ 38. I find myself doing things without paying attention.
- _____ 39. I disapprove of myself when I have irrational ideas.

Appendix G2 - Nature Based Mindfulness Approach Compass

The Nature Based Mindfulness Approach (NBMA) is very much about a journey, a way of living that deepens your ability to live well. To assist with this journey we can use a compass, one which allows us to track our progression in the different areas of our practice. The cardinal points of the compass are shown below and detailed descriptions of each area are overleaf.



The Compass Rose
A framework for
nature based mindfulness practices

USING THE COMPASS ROSE: ASSESSING PROGRESS

Many evaluation tools provide clear definitions for each stage of practice (compass points). In line with the 'integration into daily life' aims of the nature based mindfulness approach the preferred method is to encourage the individual to establish their own definitions which can of course be developed over time as practice deepens.

Simply asking questions of oneself or others (if used in teaching or coaching) can provide the answers e.g.

Q. If you were to feel you had totally integrated mindfulness into your daily life, what would this look like?

A. I would feel imperturbable, nothing would phase me. I would feel that my life, my relationships, and activities were well balanced. I would feel confident in my abilities and that I had the resources to cope with whatever challenges I may face.

This then would be the definition that fulfilled the outer most point of the compass for the Daily Life heading, with intermediate points gradually moving from the centre (e.g. totally without control, reactive, unable to cope).

With the innermost point of the compass being the starting point for each direction, this could be the point with no movement, a lack of commitment, lack of training or expertise, a lack of awareness on what direction to move and why.

Sample statements for each area are shown on the next page. Statements for intermediate or subordinate points can be discussed and agreed as appropriate.

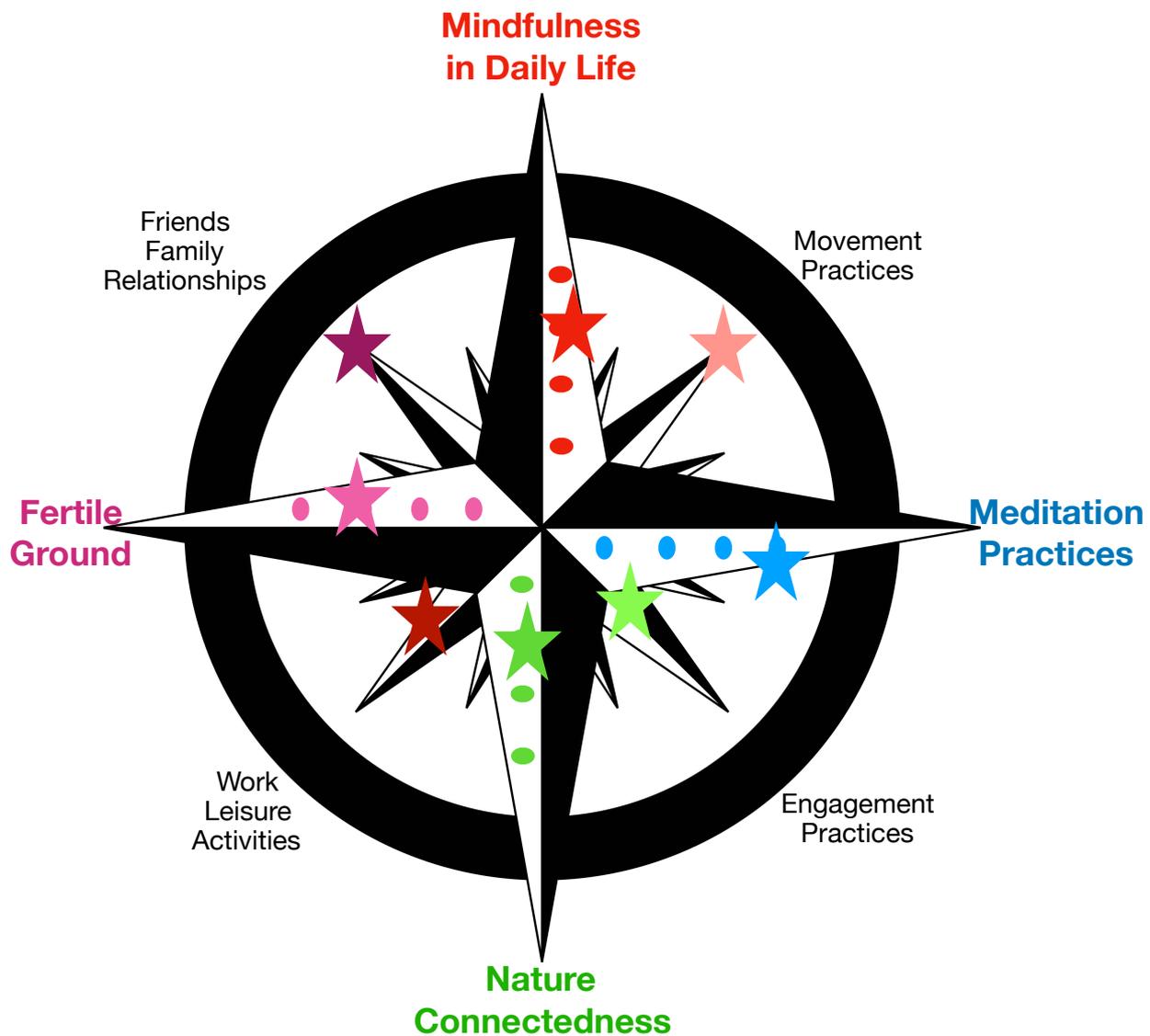
SAMPLE STATEMENTS FOR THE MAJOR DIRECTIONS (COMPASS POINTS)

Compass Point	Description
Mindfulness in daily life	This direction is about your ability to become and remain mindful throughout your day. It includes awareness of your body and energy levels (avoiding constantly 'overdoing it'. It is about your ability to be responsive rather than reactive to thoughts, actions and influences throughout your day.
Question	<i>If you were to feel you had totally integrated mindfulness into your daily life, what would this look like?</i>
Answer	<i>I would feel imperturbable, nothing would phase me. I would feel that my life, my relationships, and activities were well balanced. I would feel confident in my abilities and that I had the resources to cope with whatever challenges I may face.</i>
Nature connectedness	This direction is about your ability to interact with the natural environment we are part of. It includes your sense of place, how you interact with the world. Also how often you are able to simply notice your senses, appreciate the view, the smell of the sea or freshly mown grass, the food you eat.
Question	<i>Living in a city how would you describe your nature connections?</i>
Answer	<i>I walk everyday, through the park or neighbouring countryside. I make an effort to stop somewhere peaceful and simply notice whatever is around me, birds, flowers, smells. I aim to limit 'screen time' and get more fresh air. I am aware of my environmental impact and use public transport and am a member of Greenpeace, the RSPB and Wildlife Trust</i>
Fertile Ground	This direction is about creating the conditions for you to feel you have the ability and opportunity to practice, to have control over your own life, now and in the future. It may be about the impact of your relationships with family, friends and colleagues or about the opportunities you have for leisure time, for work which feels rewarding rather than a burden, including your ability to manage your time, energy levels, health and wellbeing.
Question	<i>If you were to advise others on the best support to help you have a greater sense of wellbeing and satisfaction what would you say?</i>
Answer	<i>That I want to improve my 'work life balance', have more time to meet and enjoy their company, to do things together, more opportunity to feel 'in control' and less isolated.</i>
Meditation Practice	This direction is about your ability to have a regular and effective meditation practice, not necessarily the same practice all the time, or one that requires sitting on a cushion for long periods. Rather it is about your meditation being effective, helping you feel calmer, with the ability to focus and recognise tendencies to allow unhelpful thoughts to intrude, to distract.

Compass Point	Description
Question	<i>Do you have a well established meditation practice that you feel contributes to your sense of wellbeing? What does it look like?</i>
Answer	<i>I meditate most days for at least 30 minutes. My practices range from body scans to simply sitting, focusing on my breath and feeling calmer.</i>

A COMPLETED COMPASS ROSE

In this example, a star is used to indicate where a person feels they are on the particular compass direction.



A completed compass showing strong family and friend relationships, which are supportive but a weaker work and leisure activity balance. These sit alongside a regular meditation practice including movement practices that together have led to an effective mindfulness in daily life practice. However the sense is of a need to develop greater connections with nature, perhaps looking at more opportunities to engage with nature in both work and leisure situations.

DISCUSSION SHEET

Compass Point	Description
Mindfulness in daily life	This direction is about your ability to become and remain mindful throughout your day. It includes awareness of your body and energy levels (avoiding constantly 'overdoing it'. It is about your ability to be responsive rather than reactive to thoughts, actions and influences throughout your day.
Question	
Answer	
Nature connectedness	This direction is about your ability to interact with the natural environment we are part of. It includes your sense of place, how you interact with the world. Also how often you are able to simply notice your senses, appreciate the view, the smell of the sea or freshly mown grass, the food you eat.
Question	
Answer	
Fertile Ground	This direction is about creating the conditions for you to feel you have the ability and opportunity to practice, to have control over your own life, now and in the future. It may be about the impact of your relationships with family, friends and colleagues or about the opportunities you have for leisure time, for work which feels rewarding rather than a burden, including your ability to manage your time, energy levels, health and wellbeing.
Question	
Answer	
Meditation Practice	This direction is about your ability to have a regular and effective meditation practice, not necessarily the same practice all the time, or one that requires sitting on a cushion for long periods. Rather it is about your meditation being effective, helping you feel calmer, with the ability to focus and recognise tendencies to allow unhelpful thoughts to intrude, to distract.
Question	
Answer	

SETTING THE COMPASS - ADDITIONAL DIRECTIONS

Those using the Compass Rose can add descriptions for the subordinate points e.g. Mindful movement - Do you have a regular movement practice that enables you to notice your body, thoughts and feelings? Use the table below to record appropriate descriptions, questions and answers.

Compass Point	Description
Work and leisure activities	
Question	
Answer	
Engagement Practices	
Question	
Answer	
Family, friends, relationships	
Question	
Answer	
Mindful Practices	
Question	
Answer	

THE ADDITIONAL SUBORDINATE / INTERMEDIATE POINTS

As you can see from the compass there are additional subordinate points that can be used if more detail is required. The table below can be used to define these.

Intermediate Compass Point	Description
Question	
Answer	
Question	
Answer	
Question	
Answer	
Question	
Answer	

Appendix H - Administrative documentation

The following documents were produced prior to the start of the project and used in recruiting participants prior to commencement. The word count is not therefore included in that of the thesis.

H.1 Consent form

H.2 Participant Information form

H.3 Ethical clearance

Section word count 988 words

H.1 Consent Form

Participant Identification:

Project Title: *Naturally Mindful: An exploration of the benefits of a nature based 'mindfulness for health and wellbeing' programme*

Name of Researcher: Steve Johnson

Please tick and initial box

- | | | |
|----|--|--------------------------|
| 1. | I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. | I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. | I understand that any information given by me may be used in future reports, articles or presentations by the researcher. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. | I understand that my name will not appear in any reports, articles or presentations unless agreed and confirmed using additional consent agreement. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. | I agree to take part in the above study, including consenting to taking part in | |
| | •Interviews | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | •Group discussion | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | •Photography and or video recording | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | •All the above | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Name of Participant	Date	Signature

Researcher	Date	Signature

H.2 Research Project - Participant Information Sheet

You are invited to take part in a research study as part of a wider research project. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

Researcher's details: Steve Johnson

Faculty of Health and Science, University of Cumbria, Lancaster Campus,
Bowerham Road, Lancaster LA1 3JD. Email stephen.johnson@cumbria.ac.uk

Title of the Research

This study forms part of a research project entitled:

***Naturally Mindful: An exploration of the benefits of a nature based
'mindfulness for health and wellbeing' programme***

What is the aim of the research?

The aim of the study is to investigate if a focus on nature enables participants on a mindfulness programme to better assimilate mindfulness practice into their daily lives with resultant improvement in health and wellbeing, greater resilience and more successful approach to self-management?

Why have I been chosen?

You have been invited to take part in the study because you have expressed an interest in using mindfulness based approaches for your own health and wellbeing.

What would I be asked to do if I took part?

You may be asked to take part in individual or group discussions, some of which may be recorded. You will of course have the right to view any material recorded. You may also be asked to record your own experience of nature using a journal, photographs, artwork or other media. You may ask for any

information given to be deleted at any time. You will be asked to confirm your consent to any materials being used.

What happens to the information collected?

All information collected is stored securely (see section on confidentiality below). The information will be analysed and may be used to identify themes for ongoing and further research. Information gathered may be included in reports, presentations, workshops and for final research publication. At all times confidentiality will be maintained unless otherwise requested and / or approved by you.

How is confidentiality maintained?

Any personal information and other data including visual materials e.g. mindmaps, copies of photographs, survey forms, and video recordings will be kept securely, including if appropriate, subject to password protection, within an office at the university, and any video or other recordings (after transcription/use) will be destroyed after their use has come to an end, but may be held in accordance with University of Cumbria policy. Your anonymity and that of any group you are part of will be assured on any survey forms, and no real names (including intervention group names) used in research output, unless participants insist on real names being published or agree to being named. Electronic data storage, other than recordings, will be held in accordance with University of Cumbria policy.

What happens if I do not want to take part or if I change my mind?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason. Should you withdraw information relating to your involvement will be deleted /destroyed.

Will I be paid for participating in the research?

There is no payment for taking part as this is entirely voluntary. As any meetings will take place in your own area you should not incur any expenses.

What is the duration of the research?

Your own involvement will depend on the responses you give and the time you are able to commit. You may be asked to take part in one to one interviews that may last for up to two hours, group discussions of a similar length and / or recording your own responses, feelings and insights over a longer period.

Where will the research be conducted?

Normally in a prearranged venue such as a community centre, coffee bar or other area open to the public.

Will the outcomes of the research be published?

Publication of the research findings may be in a variety of formats from written reports to exhibitions of visual images and recordings. You will have the opportunity to view outputs of the research before publication

For further information contact the researcher themselves (contact details above) or the Project Supervisor (details below)

Doctor Sue Lee

Faculty of Health and Well-Being

Lancaster Campus Bowerham Road Lancaster LA1 3JD

H.3 Copy of Project Ethical Clearance Consent

1 August 2013

Our Ref: IC/SB

Stephen Johnson
Faculty of Health and Science
Bowerham Road

University of
Cumbria 

Research Office
University of Cumbria
Lancaster Campus
Lancaster, LA1 3JD

Tel: 01524 384175

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Email: sonia.barnes@cumbria.ac.uk

Dear Stephen

Request for Ethical Clearance – Our Ref 12/47

Project: Naturally Mindful: an exploration of the benefits of a nature based mindfulness for health and wellbeing programme

Thank you for your application which has been given consideration by the Panel. The Panel are delighted to give approval for your project and wish you well.

Yours sincerely



Dr Ian Convery
Chair
Ethics Advisory Panel