

## What to look for in a Mindfulness Course and Teacher.

There are a proliferation of mindfulness courses on offer but they are not all the same so I have put together this information in order to help you to choose the course and teacher that is the right one for you.

**Teacher Qualification:** There are a number of training bodies for mindfulness teachers in the UK, these include Breathworks, and Bangor, Oxford, Aberdeen and Exeter Universities. (see the [UK Network for Mindfulness Based Training Organisations](#) Website for more information) The training in these organisations is vigorous and lengthy and includes:

- Helping the trainee teacher to consolidate their own mindfulness practice.
- Learning about the theory and practice of Mindfulness
- Learning to teach and lead meditations.
- Learning to teach principles of Mindfulness and help the learners to develop their understanding and practice of mindfulness and apply it to their everyday life experience.
- Working with groups effectively

Trainee teachers generally attend 14 -21 days in total of training, usually in the form of residential retreats. They then run a closely supervised and mentored course before they are accredited to train.

**Registration and regulation.** Anyone can set themselves up as a Mindfulness Teacher however the main training bodies have been working hard to introduce a measure of regulation. Mindfulness Teachers can now join the [UK Register of Mindfulness Teachers](#). In order to do this they have to go through a rigorous process establishing that that they are following the Guidelines for Teachers of Mindfulness Based Interventions and that they meet the assessment criteria.

This includes having a professional supervisor, attending a retreat every year in order to consolidate their own mindfulness practice and being supported in their application by a referee from one of the principal mindfulness organisations.

**Support and supervision:** Just like counsellors and coaches mindfulness teachers should have a formal arrangement in place to have regular professional support and supervision. This can help them develop their teaching skills, think about any issues that have come up in courses and develop their own understanding and practice of mindfulness. All mindfulness teachers should have a regular mindfulness practice themselves so that they can support their own teaching and fully understand the ups and downs of trying to live mindfully.

**Length of Courses and sessions.** The gold standard for courses is considered to be 8 weeks of 2 -2 ½ hours per week. 8 weeks is considered to be long enough to begin to embed behaviour change and 2- 2 ½ hours is long enough to practice some meditations, to learn more about mindfulness and to have some discussion and inquiry into your own developing experience of mindfulness. Courses are sometimes taught in different combinations of hours e.g. 4 x 4-5 hours over several weekends.

Short taster sessions are often available and are helpful in getting an idea of what the course (and the teacher) might be like and a chance to ask questions.

**The cost of courses:** You may well be thinking that mindfulness courses are expensive. An 8 week course with a qualified mindfulness teacher will probably cost £200 - £400 (most teachers have some concessions for people on lower incomes.). However properly trained and qualified teachers have considerable expenses, the training has probably cost them several thousands of pounds, they have to keep up their annual registration with their accrediting body and with the UK network and a requirement of this is to attend a residential retreat annually which must be at least 5 days long. In addition to these costs they have to cover the costs of buying equipment , of professional insurance, of Continuous Professional Development , of marketing , of room hire, learning materials and recordings of meditations to give to you. This is all before they start to take an income from the courses!

**Becoming a Mindfulness teacher yourself.** If you are thinking that at some point you might want to train as a mindfulness teacher the minimum standard for joining a training programme is that you have attended an 8 week course run by an accredited mindfulness teacher. You would also be well advised to develop and maintain a personal mindfulness practice for some time before you start training.

**Finally.** All the above sounds very business like and it is all very important but uppermost in most teacher's minds when they are teaching is a real desire to help you to have a really helpful and interesting experience. They will want to make you feel safe and supported as you learn and to help you to make mindfulness part of your life because your teacher will know, from personal experience and from the ever growing body of research, just what a positive effect it can have on our lives.

**LINKS:** The Website of the [UK Network for Mindfulness Based Training Organisations](#) has more information about mindfulness teaching and relevant organisations.

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See also “**And What About You Sally?**”