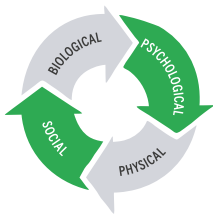


Mindfulness-based interventions



The main focus of this treatment is on psychological and social factors, as it's offered in a group.



Remember, a sideways thumb just means not enough people have done research yet to show whether this works. More thumbs ups means that more people have done research that shows that this approach does work.

What is it?

The word 'mindfulness' comes from eastern spiritual and religious traditions like Zen Buddhism. It's about being in touch with and aware of the present moment, and taking a non-judgmental approach to your thoughts and things that happen in your life – this is sometimes called being 'mindful'.

People who work in the NHS and in mental health services have started to see that mindfulness can have lots of benefits for people suffering from anxiety and depression, and more recently perhaps also for unusual and distressing experiences. Mindfulness-based therapy usually takes place in a group and involves a mixture of talking and short practices at trying to be 'mindful'. The number of meetings has varied between 6–12.

If you're having unusual distressing experiences, mindfulness is often offered in combination with CBT type therapy.

What does it aim to do?

Mindfulness encourages you to become more aware of unusual and distressing thoughts and feelings. It supports you to accept your thoughts and feelings and notice your experiences without judging them (for example as being negative experiences), or responding to them, (for example by being upset or anxious).

Mindfulness also encourages you to go easy on yourself and be less self-critical. By learning to react and think differently about everyday things that happen, mindfulness is thought to help you gain a greater sense of control and wellbeing.

Does it work?

Mindfulness-based therapies are a relatively new type of psychological treatment. There have been a number of small RCTs and a bigger 'meta' analysis, that includes mindfulness.

Early results suggest that mindfulness-based therapies may help with distress and general wellbeing, and may increase your ability to have control over your experiences. There is not much good evidence yet on whether it really helps with unusual distressing experiences, but there is lots of good evidence that mindfulness is helpful for depression.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE)

NICE does not yet recommend mindfulness-based therapies for unusual upsetting experiences.



“ Mindfulness involves non-judgementally noticing our current experiences. Mindfulness-based therapies are offered in a group where participants practice mindfulness together and talk about what they have learned.

Mindfulness practice can be unsettling at first, particularly if we tend to cope by avoiding our experiences or distracting ourselves from them. However, mindfulness based therapies for unusual distressing experiences can help to improve wellbeing and provide an opportunity to meet other people experiencing unusual distressing experiences. ”

Dr Clara Strauss,
Consultant Clinical Psychologist

How can I get this treatment?

Mindfulness is a very new treatment for unusual upsetting experiences. It is unlikely to be available through your local NHS service as it isn't yet clear whether it works. If you suffer with depression or anxiety, it is possible that your local NHS service may offer mindfulness for these difficulties.

Some NHS services also do research on Mindfulness so you may be able to take part in some research and get the therapy this way.

If you're willing to pay privately, some private services and CBT therapists specialise in mindfulness approaches.

You can find out more about this by looking on the register for the British Association of Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapists at cbtregisteruk.com where there's a section on finding a private CBT therapist in your local area.

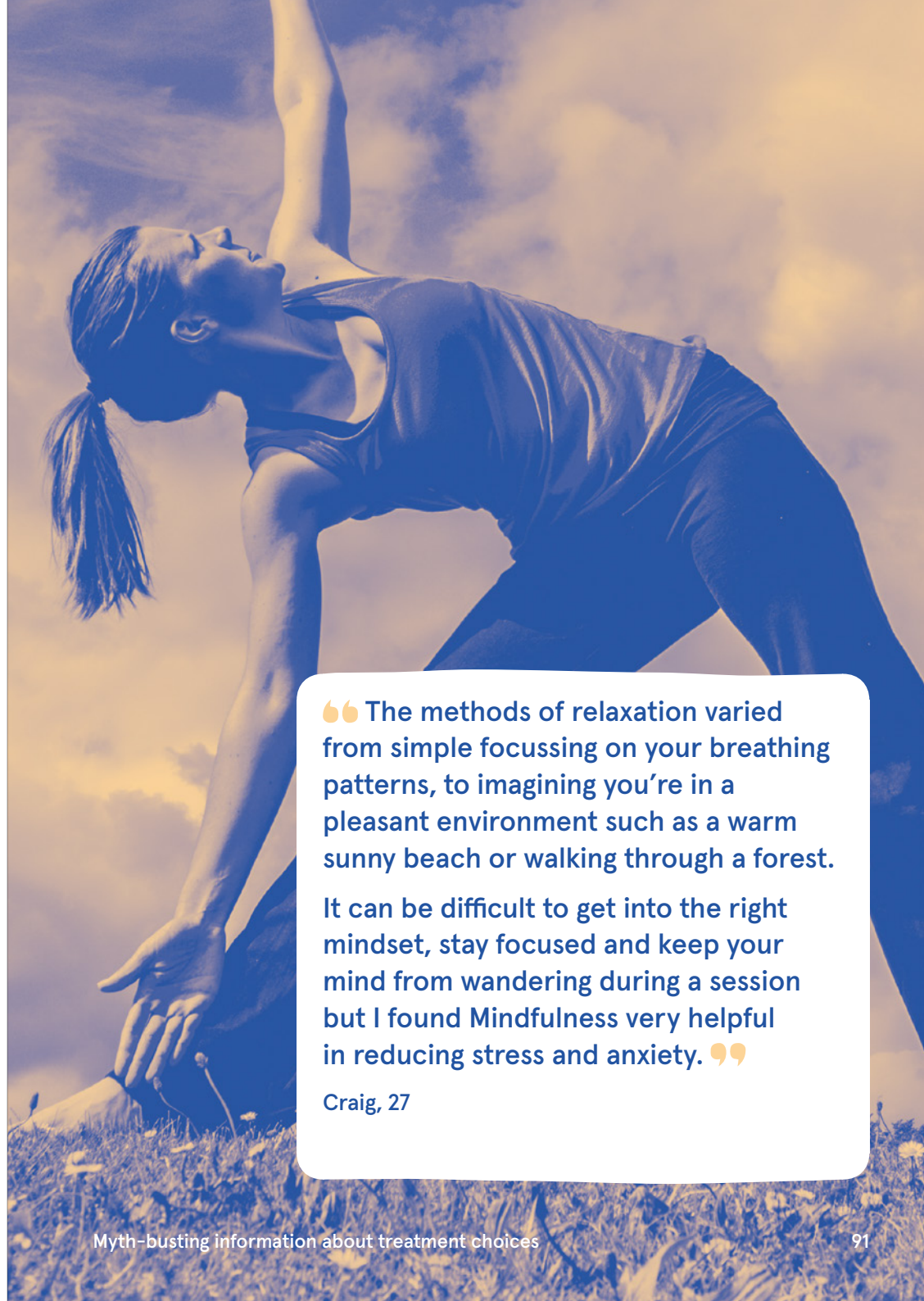
Finally, there are some good online materials and resources, like those published by the Oxford Mindfulness Centre at mbct.co.uk and Sussex Mindfulness Centre at sussexpartnership.nhs.uk/mindfulness

✓ Main pro

Mindfulness-Based Therapies originate from meditation and spiritual approaches, and so might appeal to you if you're more of a spiritual person. They may possibly help if you're feeling upset, bothered, worried or frightened and they may help you with the things you want to do in daily life.

✗ Main con

Mindfulness-Based Therapies have limited availability and at this stage it's not clear whether they work for people with unusual upsetting experiences. They also involve a lot of work on the part of participants, because it's important to practice at least short mindfulness exercises daily.



“ The methods of relaxation varied from simple focussing on your breathing patterns, to imagining you're in a pleasant environment such as a warm sunny beach or walking through a forest.

It can be difficult to get into the right mindset, stay focused and keep your mind from wandering during a session but I found Mindfulness very helpful in reducing stress and anxiety.”

Craig, 27