

Using Mindfulness Techniques to Address Pain in the Clinic ref282

Steven Bruce

Hello there, welcome to another lunchtime CPD show the last one of the month, we're going to be looking at mindfulness today. And I know it's not the first time we've taken this as a topic, but this might be the first one we've specifically considered mindfulness, his role in dealing with pain. My guest is joining us from India. So I'm hoping that the internet connection holds up well enough to get through our 45 minutes without any hiccups, because I think this is potentially a really important part of the whole bio psychosocial approach to treatment. So today's guest is Alison bale. She's a mctimoney chiropractor who's also very experienced in teaching both mindfulness and meditation. And she's been qualified as a chiropractor for about 20 odd years now. And she bases her approach on sound neuroscientific principles. Hello there Alison, how are you?

Alison Bale

Nice Dave and I'm very well thank you.

Steven Bruce

I have to say that I just commented on the internet connection and when we've got a bit I've got a better image of you than I have of people sometimes who are joining me from just down the road here so let's hope it holds up I think you've just said you've got a backup power supply there in case you get a power cut.

Alison Bale

Yeah, you know India can surprise you sometimes. Even be prepared for things to go wrong and they don't.

Steven Bruce

There's great Aviva join us. I have six o'clock in the evening for you and go where I think is But can I just kind of just start by asking you about your own background because you've done some stuff other than be a chiropractor, haven't you? And clearly, you've got a lot of experience now in this whole mindfulness thing. So where does that all stem from?

Alison Bale

Well, I, I started my work career and in the corporate world, I was in publishing. And then I was communication consultants, and finished up working in the city. And just arrived at one

of those those points in my life where I kind of knew something had to change. And at the time, I did a lot of horse riding. And I came across an article on horse riding for chiropractic for horses. And it was just kind of like a big lightbulb moment for me, but here was something to work with animals that might pay decent money. And that's actually how I came to apply. That's how I came to to apply Timoney.

Steven Bruce

As a communications consultant that sounds as though it could be quite useful in dealing with patients unless what you were somebody who worked on telecoms and radios and things like that.

Alison Bale

No, I was communication as in magazines, and electronic communication, but essentially communication as in how do you explain a particular message to an audience of people if you want them to take a particular action,

Steven Bruce

right, so actually, it is relevant to what we do in practice to a large degree because, you know, communication is, well, it's so important, isn't it? So tell me about mindfulness and meditation, then you teach people how to be mindful and how to meditate. You also teach practitioners. And I think you said, you've just finished a course with Oxford University on mindfulness for in mindfulness for long.

Alison Bale

That was me, actually, the course at Oxford was was me working on my own practice. I've meditated for more than 25 years. And I've really started just to help my own mental well being, I tend to be a bit of an over thinker, and a bit of a worrier and a bit of an over planner. Right. And I just, I felt that meditation would help break the cycle of that a little bit. And that was really where I started, and I didn't, I didn't consider using it professionally till about seven or eight years ago. But I do think that the longer you're in practice, the more you realise the whole complexity of the bio cycle and the social influences on persistent pain. Right. And it'll be different percentages for different people. And I'd be the last, I'd be the last person to say that you know, that there's a, there's always a single solution that's going to work for everybody, because I don't think there is. And, but that I began to feel that I wanted, I wanted some tools in my toolbox that would allow me to help people to help themselves, that would give people some options to suit themselves. That went beyond coming to me together. justed.

Steven Bruce

Right. So what's the what's the difference in between meditation and mindfulness?

Alison Bale

Yeah, yeah, great question. Um, mindfulness is a skill. And we all have it. In fact, all of us will do things that are mindful properly, sometimes without without even realising it. Meditation is a way of cultivating the skill. I call it the formal practice. It's widely used when you're learning mindfulness. But it isn't the only way to practice. And it isn't even necessarily, excuse me, the right place for everybody to start. In fact, I tend to share the story that the first person that I taught mindfulness to is someone who doesn't like to meditate.

Steven Bruce

Well, I was going to ask is the term meditation a bit off putting for some people because it's got almost religious connotations, hasn't it?

Alison Bale

It's generic, it depends who you're talking to. It can either be very off putting or something that people are very drawn to. I've been based in India for 15 years, and alongside my, my few like secular mindfulness training. I've also also dipped into courses here, that Paul on more Buddhist and Hindu, Hindu teachings. In fact, somebody once asked me, what what do I base my mindfulness teaching on? Essentially? Is it Hindu? Or is it Buddhist, and for me, it's neither, it take quite a secular. And as far as I can, evidence based approach, not least, because if we're being honest, I'm not a Hindu, Swami, I don't speak Sanskrit. I'm not a Buddhist monk, either. I don't speak poorly. So I can't go back to any of the original texts and teach from them. And while the very spiritually driven approach is really draws some people in and I, I've worked with mindfulness teachers who have a strong leaning towards pulling on the original Buddhist texts, no problem with that. For me, for where I come from, I try to bring quite if you like a pragmatic, practical approach that works around what is what is the problem we're trying to solve? And what would be the most workable thinking to help us make progress.

Steven Bruce

And you mentioned sort of the scientific principles there. So without wishing to sort of tax your memory for every little bit of evidence that's ever crossed your path? What are the principles that we're working on as, as opposed to the evidence at this stage?

Alison Bale

The principles, if you like, are that there are within mindfulness There are nine different attitudes as articulated by Jon Kabat Zinn, who is the guy who founded the original Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction course. And they include words like, acceptance, and non judgement, and patience, and trust. And it's really about understanding how, how those words inform how we relate to the world. I don't know if that answers your question without getting that there's all sorts of research of different of different types, taking different angles and different subjects to try and get under the skin of what it is you're actually doing when you're being mindful. And then what role does that play in how physical symptoms play out in your body?

Steven Bruce

Yeah, and I think that's where I was going with this. Really, it was really what what do we think physiologically is going on? That makes mindfulness an appropriate response to in particular pain, which is what we were talking we were talking about today.

Alison Bale

There's been a bunch of different types of studies. One of the most recent one tried to try to answer exactly that question, what do we think's happening in the brain? If you teach people to be more mindful? What is it that actually changes? And what the study suggested is that there was Mindfulness helps you, it helps develop, but the word they used was decouple the link between nociceptive information coming in from tissues arriving in the thalamus, and the parts of the cortex that make decisions about what what does that information mean? And there's there seem to be some suggestion that actually with with only quite a small amount of fairly simple practices fairly quickly, you could see a change between the levels of activity and the different parts of the brain and how they related to each other. But I actually tend sometimes to find this quite useful to us. It's a Buddhist story, actually, it's a suitor but they

talk about two arrows and the way they explain it is that when it comes to pain, pain is pain. So protective mechanisms, so to some or other extent, extent was supposed to have it doesn't mean you have to like it doesn't mean you want it going on all the time, but it is actually something that we're supposed to have. And that pain is therefore the first scenario. In other words, it's something that everybody's going to experience from time to time. And you can't necessarily do anything about that. But there's this potential always for a second arrow. And the second arrow is, is, in a sense, not the pain itself. But it's how you respond to having pain. And bear in mind that a lot of responses are habitual, and unconscious. And we're sometimes not even this is true of all of us, we're not even aware that we're doing it. And it's part and parcel of how we talk to ourselves. But that's the second arrow. And that's actually the bit the way I explained to patients is, it's a bit like a volume knob. And you can learn to have some control over it in the sense that it can be turning things up for you, or it can be turning them down. And this is something that you can learn to understand how you're thinking in a way that gives you a bit more of control over the secondary.

Steven Bruce

And, neurologically, then what is going on? Is it as simple as thinking of the brain has been distracted by something else? Which is taking literally your mind off the paper?

Alison Bale

No, good, I think very much with mindfulness, what, what you're looking to do is turn towards not turn away from, right. So if we take the principles of acceptance and non judgement, which tend to sit quite nicely together with acceptance, you'd start by acknowledging that the pain is here, and the pain is there. And at no level, are you trying to distract yourself from it, you're acknowledging that it exists and that it's there? Then what you want to try and do is to start to notice, what are you thinking about that? They have a principle of acceptance and commitment, therapy, that which is mindfulness basically used in a one to one session, but it's not the thinking is good or bad. It's just the thinking take you in the direction you want to go. So if your judgement about your pain is that this is bad. And I don't like it. And I want it to go away. And why me? And why have I got this again, what you're creating is a lot of tension, a lot of tightness, a lot of constriction, around being in pain. And what we think what you can do with mindfulness is once you know that, that's the habitual pattern of thinking, you can start to soften the thinking. And in its own way that helps to soften the body. For example, one of the things that I've noticed in myself, because for various reasons, I get quite a lot of burning and tingling in my hands, which I don't like particularly. But if instead of judging it, I just tried to watch it and get curious what I find this the tingling changes, it moves, it fluctuates, and I can almost start to have a conversation with it. That changes a the level of tension that I feel around it, but also helps actually to reduce the dimensions of the symptoms themselves. So I think it's about being aware of what it is that you're thinking and deciding whether that thinking is helping you.

Steven Bruce

It's interesting, I've always been quite a cynic about mindfulness and I and you said earlier on that there's no one size fits all in treatment of any sort. And I just suspect that I'm probably not the right person for mindfulness, because I don't approach it with the right attitude right from the outset. That doesn't mean I don't believe it's effective, just that I don't think it's effective for me, or at least not yet. On the subject

Alison Bale

of the book sandable Yeah, in fact, one of the things I would say to actually any, any therapist looking to introduce the tissue, you've got to think carefully about the person you're

introducing it to, and how you're going to go about that because there's a myriad of ways of introducing it. And there isn't really one solution for everybody. And you're probably in the majority rather than the minority actually and being a bit sceptical. I can understand that.

Steven Bruce

Well, I have I got certainly one or two patients in mind at the moment, who I think if I said to them, Look, I know you you've got this nasty, horrible chronic pain. I think you should do some mindfulness. I think they're their background. and their experience so far in life, the expectations they have from everything around them is that no, I want, I don't know, I want you to stretch the muscles or click a joint or give me a drug or carry out some surgery, obviously not me. And that will fix my pain. I don't want to have to try and deal with it through a psychological approach, because it's there. And it's very distracting. There's nothing I can do about it.

Alison Bale

Yeah, sorry. I think that's also bound up with with people very quickly hear the term psychosomatic. And it's all in the head if you're not careful. And that's a real communication hurdle to get over.

Steven Bruce

Yeah. Fascinating, isn't it? Because because it by definition, it is all in the head. But that doesn't mean it's not real.

Alison Bale

It's all real. Yeah, thanks.

Steven Bruce

Marguerite has sent in a question she says, Can the information that you were talking about be different for different people? She says many factors related to relate to this, such as past experiences, mind frame and biomechanics, such as their adaptation and posture?

Alison Bale

Yeah, I mean, I think there's just there's different ways of introducing mindfulness as a practice. And for some people, you might want to look at introducing some very simple ways of connecting with their breath. But for other people, you might not want to use the breath at all. For some people where they might want to start. This, again, is something that I found really helped me is that when I first started to practice, I couldn't work out what I was thinking. And I found that simply the act of writing things down so that I got more familiar with my habits of thinking was the best thing for me to do. Because sometimes, oddly enough, when you start to see it down on paper, you can actually start to go, oh, well, no wonder that's making me feel tense. There's quite a lot of nice practices in mindfulness teaching that are about movement. They're not about sitting, they're not about meditation, they're about movement. And again, what what my experience has been that is that actually, sometimes a formal sitting practice, or a breathing practice isn't actually the right thing for me to do, and I'm better doing some movement. For other people, it might be finding ways to be mindful that they can just work into their everyday, it's just getting to understand that that being that little bit more present, being that little bit more in the body and less in the head can actually be a route to helping them reduce their pain. And here are some practical ways to do it.

Steven Bruce

Interesting. So if you were then to take a grumpy old bugger like me. And let's say that I've come to you and said, Look, I've got this chronic back pain, and I've seen all sorts of people, it hasn't gone away. How would you try to introduce mindfulness in whatever form to a sceptic of my sort?

Alison Bale

I think I think the first things I do actually would be to find out a bit more about what you knew about mindfulness and how you perceived it and what you thought about it. Because I can recall, years ago, somebody with with a lot of autoimmune arthritis, observing to me that even in the context of having the arthritis, she'd noticed, this is without any discussion of mindfulness. And if she was doing something that she was really absorbed in and preoccupied with that was taking her full, present moment attention, and that she was enjoying her pain reduced. So I'd like to explore with you aspects of flow, they call it in sport, when you're so in the zone and your son in the moment, and you'll have moments like this when you're treating. I mean, do you ever have moments when you're working with a patient where you're so in this zone, you know exactly what to do when to do and you're almost not having to consciously think about it, that that's an aspect of mindfulness that you're very present moment focused. So what I tried to do is I would relate it to things that you'd already feel that you could associate with, that you'd experienced. And then we perhaps talk about, well, here's a way to bring it into your everyday life for let's find something that you're already doing and bring some mindfulness concepts to that.

Steven Bruce

Interesting that kind of reflects on an observation here that's been sent in by Mrs. trellis now. You probably don't know this but Mrs. trellis is a bit gender fluid and Mrs. trellis his real name is Matthew, but there's there's history behind This, Mrs. trellises I think this is why the experience of pain and its causes is different, for example, on the rugby pitch, or even in a combat situation, when accepted as a necessary part of the experience and unavoidable. So paradoxically, one can move around and beyond it. Now, I've always thought actually, that was an adrenaline response. And that while the adrenaline is flowing, you don't notice very much else at all. But as soon as it stops flowing, then the pain hits you.

Alison Bale

Yeah, it's an interesting one, isn't it? I do think context is important. But I also think that in the example of combat situations, and I can recall for myself, a particular horse riding accident where, in the immediate aftermath of the accident, I did not experience any pain. But I always attributed that to the fact that frankly, I was lying in the road having just been galloped over, and my primary thought was going out the road. And my body wasn't actually interested in anything else until I was safely up on the grass birch, there's not going to be just one element to unpick here, there's definitely going to be an adrenaline response. And that's definitely going to change how we perceive pain and what the body and the brain think they can attend to at any given moment. And this, you know, this is partly where I also think some of the, some of the research is quite difficult. You know, we I referred earlier to the study where they looked at the decoupling. Now, what that research was done on was it was done on people who weren't in pain, and then received a stimulus to create pain. To me, that's a different animal to somebody who's been experiencing different types of persistent pain over a long period. Sometimes, for reasons they may not be fully clear on themselves. So that there's got to be different aspects. We've got to leave room more so for the physiological, but the context does seem to matter to what you perceive the pain, what you think about it, whether you think you can get help quickly enough. Whether you feel reassured by the people who are trying to help you. That's all got to be part of the mix, too.

Steven Bruce

Yeah, and I'm still actually, we were talking about this horse riding accident. I'm hoping that at some point in the show, you're going to explain how you tuck a horse into adopting mindfulness practices, but well. They seem pretty focused to me, the only thing they're ever focused on is that piece of grass over there.

Alison Bale

Animals teach us not the other way around when it needs to be caught mindfulness.

Steven Bruce

Simon's actually sent in a comment, which is very true that you mentioned psychosomatic and and he says, it's an expression that's been so overused that in his experience, it's seen as a very negative word by patients, which is a shame because it has a very specific meaning. But as you say, patients perceive it negatively, I think

Alison Bale

they do. But I was interested to be listening fairly recently to Gabor moto. And hear him say that in his opinion, psychosomatic should be allowed to be a diagnosis in its own right. Because he merely reflects the capacity of the body to talk to the brain and the brain to talk to the body. And this happens all the time. And it shouldn't really be seen as as a negative, he felt it was a valid diagnosis. One thing I would say about it that that I've, I've learned from my practice that surprised me is I tend to be a very, in my head sort of person, a thinker. But what I found through my own practice, I always used to think I gotta get my head under control in order to manage my body. So if I wanted to reduce tension in my body, I got a change, I was thinking, I've got to try and get ahead of my habitual anxiety or whatever. What I found through practice is actually sometimes you can come at it the other way around, you can work with the body, and that actually softens the mind. But But I do feel that there's a big barrier, because people will think you're telling me this is all in my head. And although we know from the science, that there's a big role for the head in pain, nevertheless, for the general public, that there's a real danger that you put them off before you've even started.

Steven Bruce

Just going back to Mrs. trellis for a moment, Matthew sent in a thing here, he says to, to paraphrase a very old medical book he wants to read. Pain is like the club bore. You might not be able to avoid talking to him, but you don't have to get too bound up in what he's saying. Which I suppose is. It's a nice way of expressing what you were saying that I was going to. I was going to ask you talked about movement earlier on and I don't know what sort of movement activities You might use to help them dealing with pain. But you made me immediately think of Tai Chi, which I have done to a limited extent, one brief period in my life. And I thought that, for me, that was a very nice way of focusing my mind on specific, simple activities, which kind of distracted you from everything else that was going on around you.

Alison Bale

I think, yeah, Tai Chi, Chi Gong, a lot of mindfulness teachers are also yoga teachers.

Steven Bruce

The Gong is

Alison Bale

not very well, it's a it's a Chinese. I think it's Chinese. But it is a kind of flowing movement with the breath. And what it's all about, what you can come back to it with any of these things. Or even if you're just getting people to move in a mindful way, is that you're asking somebody to focus only on the movement that they are doing right at that moment. So it needn't necessarily be a yoga move, or tai chi or Qigong. It could be walking in a way that pays attention to each footfall. It could be just a conscious slowing down upon movement and paying attention to the sense of each foot as it rises and falls.

Steven Bruce

Right? Which all sounds very, very simple. But it does make me wonder just how experienced you have to be in mindfulness as a clinician to be able to recommend specific practices to your patients.

Alison Bale

Yeah, this is this is quite a difficult, this is quite a difficult area. I think mindfulness is simple, but it's actually not easy. And it very often brings people face to face with themselves, which actually isn't always comfortable. And this is where you'll sometimes see headlines that people saying, well, mindfulness made me worse. And that can be part and parcel of the fact that when you start being aware of how you think, and what you feel, actually it can kind of shine a spotlight on it in a way that's not always very comfortable. Yeah, it's not necessarily always a very pleasant experience. And this is why even for me, if somebody wants to work with me, I do a little bit of screening before I take them on. Because there were there are certain types of problems that I wouldn't. You know, some of the people I've trained with, have very strong backgrounds in psychotherapy, or their mental, their mental health nurses, they've already got a very strong background in working with people who are sometimes quite troubled. And for me, I might have boundaries around thinking, Well, I'm actually not the best person to work with, to work with somebody. And there might be times when really honestly, mindfulness is not what you want somebody to go for.

Steven Bruce

Okay, how easy is it for you to decide that? Was that something you find out after you've been doing it for a while?

Alison Bale

Um, well, I do for starters, have a little bit of a Screening Questionnaire. And I do invite if people are interested to work with me one to one, or even if they want to just take a course in a group, that I might invite them, we'll just have a preliminary talk. And in the same way that I would screen somebody's car, practically, I'll find out a bit more about their background, what they already know, a little bit about their medical history. And there are certain situations in which I'd ask them to talk to their doctor first. Because we know, yeah,

Steven Bruce

so here's what Darcy has to say about mindfulness and measuring this will resonate with you. A lot of people or patients tend to think that mindfulness is a fix, with just a few weeks of effort to make the changes reduce the pain. And of course, that can happen, but it really is a way of becoming more present in this moment. There's no other moment. This helps cut or cut off all the psychic pain and baggage that we have and continually run all the time. It's an ongoing effort and the work in a work has to be done lots of exclamation marks. Is that how you perceive it?

Alison Bale

Absolutely. I mentioned Jon Kabat Zinn earlier, he founded the original Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction course in the US and I remember hearing him say that when people first used to ask him about his own practice, he used to talk about how long he sat in meditation in the morning, but now he answers the question in a completely different way. Because mindfulness is how he relates to the world all the time. And certainly, that's, that's now, I do for more practice, because I enjoy it. But for me, it's it's the attitudes of mindfulness. It's the acceptance, it's the non judgement, it's the patience and the trust, and the non striving and the beginner's mind and the kindness and compassion, that I tried to bring us a thread through the day. And if you know, it's a tricky one, do you tell people this is going to be a lifetime journey, when they're only just at the start of it? Is that is that going to reassure them? Because you're being realistic? Or is it going to put them off. And so I think, again, it's about trying to find a shortcut that people feel they can start with. But it is very much, even when, when I'm teaching any course, you know, I have to explain to people that it's all very well to come to the weekly sessions. But it's what you do between the sessions, that's really going to make the difference. And it's what you do going forward. If you can find a way to do a little bit of practice, every day, you'll make progress. But I almost think it's the antithesis of a quick fix. But I can also understand why people are keen to try and get hold of what's the magic wand and I do understand that

Steven Bruce

elvina says that it has said that at one point, she came across a walking meditation, which sounds to me like a recipe for getting run over by a bus. Have you come across that?

Alison Bale

Yeah, I use walking meditation, and always comes with the proviso of please pick your place to walk. You know, I know when I did my training, we were actually at Centre, which is in the middle of a park. But it was still a question of pick your place to practice so that you're not going to get run over by somebody else trying to get from A to B much faster than you're going. But you can literally do a walking meditation just in a few, a few feet in a safe space, because it's about how you move rather than rather than needing a big amount of room.

Steven Bruce

So how then practically, do we and by that, I mean, me and all those other people who are watching at the moment who don't have a background in mindfulness, how do we use this with the next patient who comes through our door?

Alison Bale

Okay, well, I think there's a number of simple ways to introduce the concept of just trying to be a bit more present. So I mentioned earlier the value for some people have of just getting into the habit of writing a few notes about what it is they're thinking, so that they begin to understand a bit better about what they're saying to themselves in relation to the pain. And this is not to judge thinking as either good or bad. It's to understand that and then say, Okay, if that's what I'm saying to myself, is that helping me recover. For other people, it might be useful for them to start with some simple breathing practices. Now, typically, when you're teaching mindfulness, you're saying to people, that we don't want you to change or control the way you breathe. But I actually think when people are working with pain, it can be quite useful to have some sort of anchor. So whether it's that you encourage somebody to just take a conscious breath. So an unconscious breath is just a breath they're aware of normally, we don't notice our breathing. But the moment that you notice your breathing, that's the moment of mindfulness. And it might be or encourage people to just take, take five conscious breaths, once or twice a day. Some people find it useful to have a way of

breathing and there's various different options. There's something called Box breathing, which means you breathe in for four. You hold for four. Do you breathe out for for your whole for fall, and you keep going round that box. You can also do a kind of breathe in for three hold for for breathe out for five so that you consciously elongate the out breath. And there are all sorts of other small practices like that, where you're not doing a formal meditation, you're just getting into the habit of when you notice yourself getting anxious, or tense or worried or overthinking about the pain that you bring your attention to something very present. There is a there is an exercise that can be really useful for some people. And it won't work well. For others. It depends how facial your patient is. But sometimes it can be useful for some people to actually get them to just stop. Breathe. And let's say it's it's pain in the hand, you encourage them to bring as close attention as they can to the hand. And then you just start asking them questions that are about the pain, but not the normal questions that you'd normally ask. So you might ask somebody, what colour is the pain? Is it shallow or deep? Is it moving? Or is it static? If it is moving, how is it moving. And once you've established a few parameters, you can get them to start to play with it. So if they said that the paint is red, ask them to visualise change and become and see what happens when they change the colour. And if the pain is moving, you can find out is it moving fast or slow? Is it spinning. And just whatever the parameters are that they can visualise whatever they can relate to encourage them to change it. And to observe what happens when they do. Because what you tend to find is people start to get this idea that okay, for colour starts off red, and I change it to blue, suddenly, it doesn't have as much. But if colour doesn't work, try movement. Just try different ways of talking about the pain and relating to it. Something else that that is seemingly simple, but one of the things we try to encourage with mindfulness is creating a separation a little bit between you and the experience. And one way to do this is just to start to talk about the pain in the third person. So talk about the back rather than my back. And this is not to dismiss the pain in any way. It's just to try and create that little bit of a gap between the physical sensation and the emotion and the feelings that go with it.

Steven Bruce

Okay, I've had a number of people talking about so the resources that are available on on the Internet, whether YouTube or other, all the other recommended sites that you would suggest for people to turn to somebody has mentioned a thing called the calm app. And I didn't get any specifics for YouTube guided practice, but you might know some.

Alison Bale

Yeah, there's lots of different places for people to start. Calm is a popular app. As is headspace, um, coming to something, Stephen, that we were talking about earlier about, though, about can you do too much online? And do we actually need to be getting back more face to face? I was having a conversation with with a colleague the other day and the issue with some of the apps is because you tend to be practising on your own. Does that add to that sense of isolation and there's actually a an online service called Insight Timer, which has lots of different people offering free guided practices on and when you sit and use them you can see through your practice, you can see how many people you're practising with. A couple of of good books, both of which come with Well, it used to be CDs, but now I imagine it's mp3 As you can download. Marc Williams who develop the course that they run at Oxford wrote a book called finding peace in a frantic world. And that takes you through some of the Oxford approach. So it's a good book to read. And it comes with some guided practices. Jon Kabat Zinn has done quite a lot as well, he wrote his first book is Full Catastrophe Living. And that again, has some guided practices with it. Partly, it's about finding somebody you relate to. So yes, there are lots of YouTube options. There's lots of people on social media as well. And if anybody wants to take a look, not blowing my own

trumpet, but at my website, there are some free guided practices there. And there's some blogs, and I've got a YouTube channel as well.

Steven Bruce

Your website, your website is mind insight dot online.

Alison Bale

That's right. Yeah. But I think the way I see a lot of the apps and the YouTube and the blogs is, it's a way for you to get familiar with how somebody teaches and also what they sound like, I know that sounds odd. But if you're going to do guided meditation with somebody, it's really helpful if you like the sound of their voice. It's so but ultimately, I think it's also mindfulness is easy, but it's, it's not simple. And it is it is. There's also a good kind of mindfulness for Dummies, which is a nice introduction by Shama, shallot Dinya, that comes with some free guided meditation as well. But I'm just going to say this, of course, I would, I don't actually think there's any substitute ultimately, for sitting down and doing a course, whether you look for a teacher like me, who's an independent, and as the teachers register that you can look at whether you'd go to something like the Oxford mindfulness Foundation, they run regular courses, or you go to Breathworks, who are in Manchester, who also run regular courses. And what I'd say is, if something that you really want to understand better yourself, go and do yourself an eight week course.

Steven Bruce

Right? Okay, we've got very little time left, Julie Allison, and I'm not gonna be able to cover all the questions that are here. I'm surprised that there's any evidence at all to support the use of mindfulness, not again, because it doesn't work, but simply because who's going to put in the money for to do the research? Do you have any references you can share with us that I can put out to the audience later? I don't do it now. But what if you can let me have them, I can send them out in a follow up email.

Alison Bale

Yeah, I've got a selection of references that I tend to use in a basic presentation. But what I also try to do when when I'm writing on the subject, and I've written quite a lot about mindfulness for pain, is I do actually try to dig around and include one or two academic references to say, because because I, you know, I know it's not the right word. But yeah, I prefer to back when I'm saying with some sort of evidence to support, it wouldn't be that comfortable if there wasn't any. So I do tend to include references in my articles. But I've got I've got four or five different different studies that I tend to that I tend to quote,

Steven Bruce

thank you know, it'd be great if you could share those with us later that will be right will be fantastic. And I'm have to apologise to Simon and Andrew and Claire and a few others whose questions I haven't asked. I haven't had time, I'm afraid. But I'm very grateful, Alison, for you giving up your time. Thank you. It's so even for an old sceptic like me, it's actually very interesting. And I will certainly be following it up.

Alison Bale

Well, if anybody wants, if any of the people who've got questions didn't get them answered, if they want to just get in touch with me,

Steven Bruce

I can send them through to you from here. Yeah.

Alison Bale

And then through to me, and I'll be happy to to answer what I can.

Steven Bruce

Thank you very much, indeed. Very good talking to you.

Alison Bale

Thank you very much.

DRAFT TRANSCRIPT