

# BLACK DOG INSTITUTE

## GP NEWSLETTER

### MINDFULNESS EDITION

#### Using Mindfulness Meditation in Practice

by Dr Sarah Edelman

Mindfulness involves bringing conscious awareness and attention to the present moment with an attitude of openness and curiosity. Typically the practitioner observes sensory experience as it occurs - the breath, sounds, thoughts, body sensations, smells and even tastes. Emotions are observed as events within the mind, without over-identifying with them, judging or trying to change them. In contrast to other forms of meditation where thoughts are considered a distraction, in mindfulness thoughts may be used as objects for observation.

Mindfulness meditation can be practised both formally (e.g. in the sitting posture), and in daily life situations. We can become mindful by focusing on our current experience at any time of the day. Activities such as walking, eating, washing, exercising, resting, or even putting out the garbage provide excellent opportunities to practise mindfulness in daily life. They provide a diverse range of stimuli, any of which may become the object of our attention – sounds, visual images, physical sensations, breath and perceptions.



Over the last decade, mindfulness meditation has been widely embraced in clinical psychology\*. Some practitioners have added mindfulness to established psychological treatments (such as Cognitive Behaviour Therapy), while others provide a more “mindfulness based perspective” to their clinical work. There are many ways in which mindfulness is being incorporated into psychological therapy. For instance, it enhances insight by helping patients to be aware of their current experience. Starting a therapy sessions with a brief mindfulness exercise can help the patient identify feelings, issues of concern and physical sensations that might otherwise not be identified. Mindfulness can also be used for reducing anxiety and relieving depressed mood. It is somewhat

paradoxical that the very process of observing painful emotions without judging or resisting them allows them to transform, and very often to remit.

Mindfulness techniques can be a great adjunct to cognitive based therapies. By learning to observe thoughts as they arise in daily life situations, without ‘buying into’ their content, we create some distance from our thoughts. While CBT involves challenging the content of thoughts, and mindfulness involves observing the process, both reinforce the idea that thoughts as just thoughts – and are not reality.

Mindfulness based strategies are also a key feature of pain management programs. Observing unpleasant physical sensations such as pain, dizziness or even tinnitus, with an attitude of calm acceptance helps to transform the experience by removing the emotional distress that normally accompanies them.

**Sarah Edelman PhD is a clinical psychologist and trainer at the Black Dog Institute.**

\* See page 4 regarding evidence for this use

#### CONTENTS

Mindfulness in Practice	1
Psychological Toolkit	2
Book Review	2
Course Dates	3
Program News	3
A Simple Exercise	4
Research into Mindfulness	4
Mindfulness Resources	4

**Welcome to our special Mindfulness edition of the GP Newsletter. We hope you enjoy it. If there is anything else you would like to see included in future editions please email suggestions to [k.denton@blackdog.org.au](mailto:k.denton@blackdog.org.au).**



# THE PSYCHOLOGICAL TOOLKIT

## MINDFULNESS RESOURCES

The PTK contains resources for use in practice to introduce mindfulness to patients.



### 1. Mindfulness in Everyday Life. This has 2 parts

a. GP notes – which explain what mindfulness is and how it can be ‘sold’ to patients, as well as a reference list.

b. A patient handout – this details a number of mindfulness techniques that can be put into practice by patients.

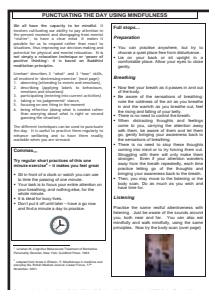
### Tips for using

- Go through sheet with patient in session, clarifying anything if needed.
- Work on motivating patient to practice daily/regularly
- Encourage patient to self monitor their practice – perhaps enter on mood chart - and report back to you.
- Try mindfulness yourself – it’s sure to be beneficial, and will give you added credibility!

### 2. Punctuating the Day Using Mindfulness

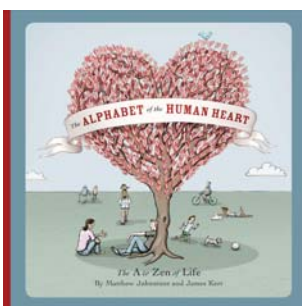
This sheet presents the information and exercises in a different way, using the metaphor of punctuation

- ‘Full Stops’ – taking some time out to practice.
- ‘Commas’ – a quick exercise to use in any spare minute.
- ‘Parentheses’ – to insert when feeling particularly stressed



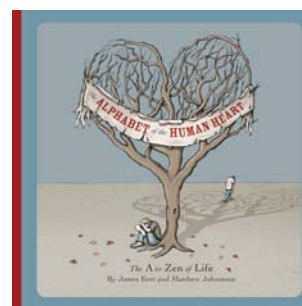
## BOOK REVIEW

### *THE ALPHABET OF THE HUMAN HEART* *Matthew Johnstone and James Kerr*



This is not strictly a book about mindfulness but it is a very mindful book! Matthew Johnstone (‘I Had a Black Dog’ and ‘Living with a Black Dog’) and his friend James Kerr have created two special ‘conjoined twins’ books

‘A handbook for the happy, and a bible for the broken hearted, **The Alphabet of the Human Heart** is an enchanting and enriching journey through the upside and the downside of what it means to be human – our hopes and fears, our strengths and our weaknesses, our highs and our lows’.



It is an A to Zen of how we feel: our pleasures and pain, our loves and losses, our sadness and our joys. Each book presents 26 attributes of human life and experience, working alphabetically through, in ‘The Upside’ from Adventure (the opposite of television) and in ‘The Downside’ from Anger, till both converge at Zen.

The choice of key words, the drawings and the written words combine to give incredible insight into the highs and lows of life, and many have a very mindful message. The reader is challenged to take action to starve the downside and nurture the upside.

Matthew and James say “We hope that it might help describe something of the extraordinary experience of being alive. We hope it might help people achieve a more resourceful state: happier, wiser, calmer, more productive, more loving. And we hope that it might spark a moment of realisation that we are, all of us, most definitely not alone. We also hope it might make a good present for someone you love.”

I think it would also be a very empathic, but encouraging book for many of our patients suffering from depression – if you can bear to lend it to them!

Alphabet of the Human Heart is published by Pan MacMillan Australia 2009.

This book can be purchased at [www.alphaheart.com](http://www.alphaheart.com) and from major bookstores.

# PROGRAM UPDATE

## 2009 BLACK DOG INSTITUTE UPDATE

The Black Dog Institute has continued to enjoy growth and success in 2009, with a lot of activity and new initiatives occurring across the Institute. In 2009, 1,241 GPs (and registrars) have participated in our education programs, with 714 of those undertaking Mental Health Skills Training. To have reached so many GPs this year is very encouraging for the big plans we have for the program in 2010 and beyond. Next year we will expand our programs into new areas, with a focus on rural GPs and registrars. We will continue to develop new programs, informed by our clinical research and through consultation with the GP community- providing relevant education for GPs working in mental health. As we improve and expand, there may be some changes to our programs in the new year, about which we will inform GPs directly, and through Divisions.

The Institute's Professional Education Team also conducts professional education for psychologists, school counsellors, nurses and others- these programs have also enjoyed much success this year and will likewise grow in 2010. Our community programs have also prospered in 2009, hosting community forums and education in rural NSW, in schools and workplaces. We are grateful for our fast- increasing number of supporters and fundraisers, who have dedicated much time and energy to the Institute this year.

I encourage you to visit our website for updates across the full range of Institute activity, including clinician and patient resources, research studies, and community activities.

Thank you and have a safe and happy holiday season.

*Larissa Briedis - Manager, Professional Education Programs*

### GP COURSE DATES

#### JANUARY

- 23RD Demystifying Depression: Cowra  
30TH Demystifying Depression: Black Dog Institute

#### FEBRUARY

- 6TH Demystifying Depression: ACT  
6TH Demystifying Depression: Parramatta  
13TH Demystifying Depression: Wagga Wagga  
14TH Difficult Consultations: Wagga Wagga  
14TH Psychological Toolkit: Wagga Wagga  
20TH Troubled Teens: Black Dog Institute

#### MARCH

- 27TH Ups and Downs (Bipolar Disorder): Black Dog Institute

#### MAY

- 1ST Demystifying Depression: Black Dog Institute  
16TH Troubled Teens: Parramatta  
21ST/22ND Demystifying Depression: Sydney GPCE  
22ND/23RD Demystifying Depression: Sydney GPCE

#### JUNE

- 26TH Mental Health Treatment Plans: Black Dog Institute  
26TH Psychological Toolkit: Black Dog Institute

To register for a program please visit our website: [blackdoginstitute.org.au](http://blackdoginstitute.org.au). For further information please email Katie at [k.denton@blackdog.org.au](mailto:k.denton@blackdog.org.au) or call 02 9382 8518

Please note that the programs listed above are subject to confirmation. Please check our website for further dates and updates.

For off-site programs please contact the relevant Division (contact details are on our website).

### MENTAL HEALTH SKILLS TRAINING

If you still need to complete Mental Health Skills Training (formerly Level 1 initial) the two BDI courses which currently offer this accreditation are Demystifying Depression and Troubled Teens. Both are 6-hour programs. We are also in the process of upgrading our Bipolar program to 6-hours and intend to register this for MHST accreditation by the time we run the program in March.

We will continue to run these programs throughout 2010, and will also run MH CPD throughout the year.

If you are unsure if you have completed the required training, please contact the GPMHSC on 03 8699 0554. If you are unable to attend any of the training we currently have scheduled, please contact your division to request that we run a course in your area, or to find out about alternative programs.

For further information about Black Dog Institute programs please contact Katie on 02 9382 8518 or email on [k.denton@blackdog.org.au](mailto:k.denton@blackdog.org.au)



# A SIMPLE MINDFULNESS EXERCISE

Try this exercise yourself – right now!

- Sit comfortably, close your eyes
- Now focus on your breathing for a minute or two
- Then turn your attention to all the sounds that you can hear
- Listen with attention for a few minutes to these sounds
- If your attention wanders don't worry - just bring it back to the sounds you can hear
- Gently return to everyday life



This is a good exercise to use to introduce mindfulness to patients and demonstrate the concept of being in the moment.

## RESEARCH INTO MINDFULNESS FOR DEPRESSION

Evidence is growing for the use of mindfulness-based therapies in treating depression. Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy was originally designed to prevent relapse to depression but has also been found to be effective for those experiencing current depression. At the Black Dog Institute we have recently conducted a trial comparing Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy to standard Cognitive Therapy for people currently experiencing an episode of depression. We have found that both therapies were equally effective at reducing depression symptoms suggesting that mindfulness may be an alternative, effective way of treating depression.

Researchers at the Institute are currently conducting a research trial using Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy for patients with bipolar disorder. If you have any patients that you feel may like to participate, please refer them to Tania Perich on 9382 9266, [mindfulbipolar@unsw.edu.au](mailto:mindfulbipolar@unsw.edu.au)  
References available on request



## A MINDFULNESS READING LIST

### The Theory

- Kabat-Zin, J (1990) *Full Catastrophe Living*. Delta
- Segal, Z, Williams, JM, Teasdale, J, (2002) *Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy for Depression*. The Guildford Press
- Kabat-Zinn, J, Segal, Z, Mark Williams, JM, Teasdale, J, (2007) *The Mindful Way Through Depression*. The Guildford Press

### The Practice

- Brantley J (2003). *Calming Your Anxious Mind: How Mindfulness and Compassion can Free You from Anxiety, Fear and Panic*. New Harbinger Publications, Oakland, CA.
- McQuaid, J and Carmona P (2004) *Peaceful Mind: Using Mindfulness and Cognitive Behavioural Psychology to overcome Depression*. New Harbinger Publications, Oakland, CA
- Kabat-Zinn J. (1995) *Wherever you go, there you are: Mindfulness meditation in everyday life*. Hyperion

### About us:

The Black Dog Institute is an educational, research, clinical and community-oriented facility offering specialist expertise in mood disorders - a range of disorders that include depression and bipolar disorder. The Institute is located at the Prince of Wales Hospital and affiliated with the University of New South Wales. The Institute is supported by the NSW Department of Health.



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