



## Practice Group Guidance

This document is designed to help guide you through setting up your practice group. It aims to give resources of how you might like to initially start building the group, possible ways of how to structure your practice and some options of different practices and materials to cover in your group sessions.

This document is purely a guide and the suggestions are by no means the only way to run your practice group. Feel free to only take which parts feel most relevant or helpful for you and your practice group.

### Why Join a Practice Group?

Practice can be challenging, but research has shown when we practice together in a group, it helps with commitment, we improve our practice quicker than practicing alone, and we are more likely to continue our practice for longer.

People are 85% more likely to continue practicing when they are part of a practice group

In a study looking at rates of enjoyment in mindfulness practice, 58% reported they preferred practicing in a peer group, 26% preferred individual practice and 10% reported no preference to how they practice (Hanley, 2021).

"The Practice Group helps me with the discipline I need to continue my practice of mindfulness. The Group is friendly and sociable."



In a group we learn from each other, we support each other, and we create a sense of community that helps us stay committed to the practice.

Being part of a practice group doesn't just help with our learning and practice. Being part of a group also provides emotional support, reduces loneliness and improves quality of life (NHS England). One research study showed that members of an online community for those with depression found being part of an online community improved their sadness, reduced anxiety and improved overall life satisfaction (Park and Conway, 2017).

We hope with the help of this guidance, you'll be able to get your practice group off on a positive step and start to enjoy the benefits that being a member of a group can offer.

"I enjoy the social side of the group meetings. I have known the people quite a long time now and I regard them as friends and we care about each other."

"I enjoyed the course and wanted to continue doing Mindfulness as I found it helpful. At first there were four of us. Then two people dropped out. Yet two of us decided to continue to support each other. We both seemed to get a lot from it and it helped us to keep the practice going rather than trying to do it in our own."

# Getting Things Started

Feel free to use one, all or none of the below activities.

## Ice Breaker Activity - Full Circle

### Finding connections and getting to know the group

**How to do it:** Speak with others in the room to find something which connects all members of the group. If there isn't one single thing, develop a chain which links each member.

**Example:** Who has been to Australia? Who has watched Neighbours? Who has met a soap star? Who has been on TV? Has anyone been on stage? Does anyone play an instrument?

## Ice Breaker Activity - One-word Check-in

**How to do it:** Go around the group and invite each person to share one word that captures how they are (e.g., "tired," "curious," "hopeful").

**Purpose:** Grounding, emotional awareness

**Optional:** Invite a few deep breaths before starting.

**Why it works:** It encourages self-reflection and gives everyone a chance to speak early on without pressure.

## Group Agreements - Creating a group that feels safe for all

How do you want your group to be?

Below are some ideas or topics you may want to discuss in your group

- Time and place to meet
- Sharing or delegating roles
- Confidentiality and safety in the group discussions
- Open to different perspectives and respecting people's opinions
- Attendance agreement
- Contact outside of group

## Group Roles

Part of getting started is also about getting organised. Groups that are organised, share leadership and share responsibility for building and maintaining the group, are shown to be the most successful (Wang et al. 2014).

Shared leadership can look differently for different groups. Some practice groups chose to nominate members to specific roles. Such as having nominated a member of the group who is responsible for the group's technology and setting up the online platform. Whereas other practice groups have preferred that all members have access to setting up the technology.

If you prefer to assign groups roles, below are some suggestions:

# Practice Group Roles

## **Group Facilitator**

This role is responsible for checking-in with the group members, keeping the flow of the session going and the overall organisation of the group.

## **Technology Role**

This role is responsible for ensuring the online platform is working. However, the group is required to input to which platforms work best for them. Online platforms that host video conferencing are; Zoom, Google Meet and Microsoft Teams to name a few.

## **Time Keeper**

This role is responsible for keeping the group to time, moving through the agenda and ensuring the practice starts and ends promptly.

## **Practice Finder**

This role is responsible for finding or planning the practice for the group. This could be helping the group choose a practice or going searching for new practices as the group develops.

There is no right or wrong way to organise the group, just what works for your group. Reviewing and rotating through the roles reduces role fatigue, builds confidence and skills, and promotes group engagement.

## Structuring Your Sessions

Having a clear structure or guide for your sessions can build familiarity and routine to your practice. Having a guide also ensures all members feel confident in what to expect when joining. The following example has been informed by NHS Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) Implementation Resources (Kuyken et al. 2012).

# Example Structure

### **Opening Practice**

Begin with a short guided or silent practice to center

### **Check-In**

Allow members to share their current state or experiences since the last meeting

### **Main Practice**

Engage in a longer practice, such as a body scan, mindful movement, or mindfulness of sounds practice.

### **Discussion**

Facilitate a conversation about the practice, encouraging reflections and questions.

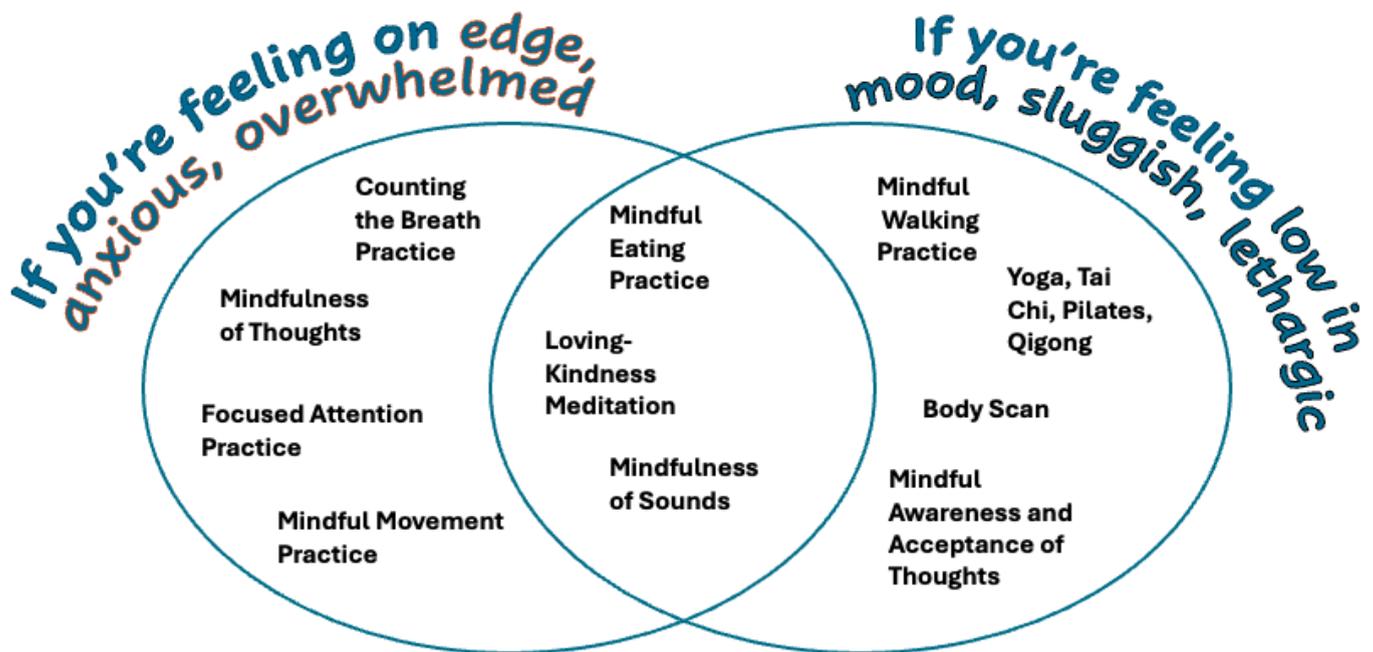
### **Closing**

End with a brief practice or a reading to consolidate the session's experience

This structure is designed as a guide and is by no means prescriptive. Part of developing a practice group is exploring different formats, durations and techniques - finding what works for you!

Mindfulness, breathing and movement practices cultivate present-moment awareness, offering benefits for mental and physical well-being, including reduced stress, improved focus, and enhanced emotional regulation (Goh et al., 2023).

While all practice is beneficial, specific types of practice can address particular challenges. For example, mindful breathing and body scans manage anxiety (Fincham et al., 2023), loving-kindness meditation supports self-esteem (Galante et al., 2014) and conflict resolution, and mindful movement aids restlessness or chronic pain (Yin et al., 2021). Selecting appropriate practices makes mindfulness a practical tool for everyday life.



## Practices Catalogue

The table below lists different approaches to practicing mindfulness. It gives a brief overview of the practice, how it might be helpful and where you can find more information.

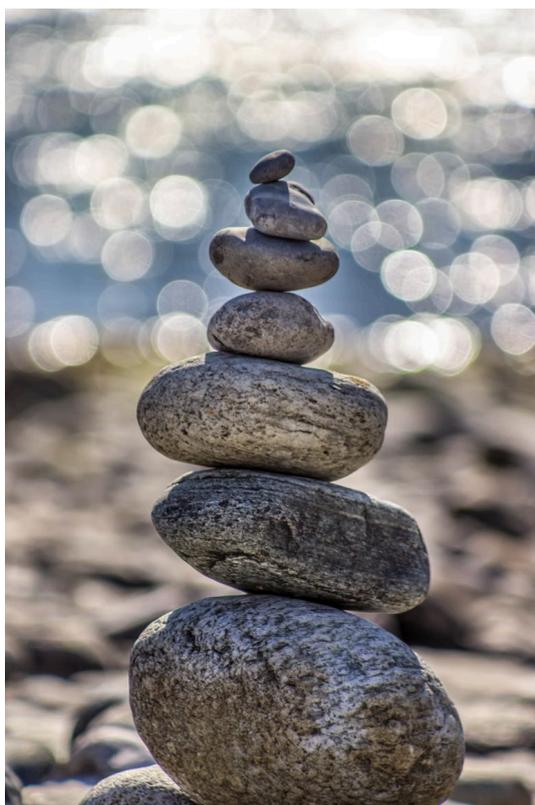
All our resources come from reputable sources, including certified yoga teachers, mindfulness practitioners or qualified psychologists. Organisations listed have also been designed and regulated by professionals within the wellbeing field.

The practices listed below are ones which research has demonstrated have robust clinical evidence for their positive effects on reducing stress, improving emotional regulation, decreasing anxiety and overall promoting a positive sense of wellbeing.

Type of Practice	What Is It?	How it helps	Where can I find a resource?
<b>Counting breath practice</b>	Focusing on your breathing and counting each inhale or exhale (e.g., counting from 1 to 10, then repeating).	Helps anchor attention, reduce distractions, and calm the mind.	<a href="#">The Mindful Life Website</a>
<b>Body Scan</b>	Paying close attention to physical sensations in the body, typically moving from head to toe.	Enhances body awareness and helps detect tension or discomfort. Reduces stress, improves relaxation, and can help with pain management.	<a href="#">The Mindful Life Website</a> <a href="#">Anxiety Canada - Body Scan Script</a> <a href="#">30 minutes body scan practice</a>
<b>Yoga</b>	Combines mindful movement with breath and body awareness through various physical poses.	Connects the body and mind, encouraging presence and reducing stress. Improves flexibility, strength, and mental clarity; supports emotional regulation.	<a href="#">The Mindful Life Website</a> <a href="#">Yoga with Adriene</a>
<b>Loving Kindness Meditation</b>	Sending kind wishes to oneself and others (e.g., "May you be	Cultivates compassion, empathy, and	<a href="#">10 Minute Loving-Kindness Practice</a>

	happy, may you be healthy”).	emotional resilience. Increases positive emotions, reduces self-criticism, and enhances social connection.	
<b>Focused attention practice</b>	Concentrating on one object (like the breath or a candle flame) while gently returning attention when distracted.	Builds mental discipline and sharpens concentration. Strengthens focus, reduces mental chatter, and improves cognitive control.	<a href="#">Focused attention information</a> <a href="#">HeadSpace - Focused Attention</a> <a href="#">Declutter The Mind - Focused Attention</a>
<b>Mindful Movement practice</b>	Moving with full awareness, such as in slow walking, stretching, or gentle exercise. Encourages being present in the body and in motion.	Enhances body awareness, reduces stress, and grounds attention.	<a href="#">The Mindful Life Website</a> <a href="#">Introduction to Mindful Movement - Mindful.org</a>
<b>Mindful eating practice</b>	Eating slowly and deliberately, noticing the taste, texture, and experience of food.	Helps foster a healthier relationship with food and reduces mindless eating. Aids digestion, improves portion control, and increases enjoyment of food.	<a href="#">Mind - Mindful Eating</a> <a href="#">The Raisin Practice 5mins</a>
<b>Mindfulness of sounds</b>	Paying attention to surrounding sounds without judgment or interpretation.	Encourages openness and acceptance of the present moment. Enhances sensory awareness, reduces reactivity, and supports emotional regulation.	<a href="#">The Mindful Life Website</a>
<b>Mindful walking</b>	Walking slowly and attentively, focusing on	Brings mindfulness into everyday	<a href="#">Mindful.org - Mindful Walking</a>

<b>practice</b>	each step and bodily movement. Opening awareness to sounds, temperatures, sensations and objects.	activities. Promotes calmness, improves balance, and integrates mindfulness into daily life.	<a href="#">American Psychological Association- Mindful Walking Prompts</a>
<b>Mindfulness of thoughts</b>	Observing thoughts as they arise, without judgment or attachment.	Develops insight into mental habits and reduces over-identification with thoughts. Decreases rumination, improves emotional clarity, and fosters mental flexibility.	<a href="#">The Mindful Life Website</a> <a href="#">Mndful.org - Mindfulness of thoughts</a> <a href="#">7 Minute practice</a>



## Reflecting as a Group

Sharing your thoughts and experiences as a group has been shown to improve group cohesion and improve self satisfaction (Dumas et al., 2008). Sharing what we've experienced with others improves accountability, builds connections, provides peer validation, support and fosters a sense of belonging.

## Celebrate Wins!

Committing to your practice and routinely showing up to your group requires dedication and effort. Which is why it's just as important to celebrate wins and efforts along the way.

Research has also shown us that groups that highlight successes, and champion each other's efforts, build stronger connections, have a deeper sense of belonging and rate having more satisfaction and enjoyment in the group (Lyons et al., 2021; Kwon, 2024).

## Ways to Celebrate



### **Consistent Attendance**

(e.g. attending 5 sessions in a row, or every session for a month)



### **Celebration Circles**

(once in a while, dedicate a session to reflecting on progress and appreciations)



**Welcoming New Members or Bidding Farewell with Gratitude** for those moving on



### **Group Anniversary**

(e.g. 3 months, 6 months, 1 year of meeting together)



**Personal Breakthroughs** (e.g. someone shares that they managed anxiety using a technique learned in group)

Your practice group doesn't have to stay online, you may want to organise meeting up in a different location for a session or take your practice outdoors, meet in person and go for a group outing where possible.

Overall, your practice group is yours to run in a way which works for you.

**Enjoy your practice, learn new skills, build a community that matters to you.**

"It is ALWAYS good especially for people living on their own to have the chance for online video chat so they know they are not alone in the world."

"The group 'gelled' after we had had a social meal together and each covered a short 'life history'...we are very diverse backgrounds, but each has had different opportunities and hardships but have a common interest in finding a bit of 'calm'"

## Putting it all Together

Practice is rarely glamorous and can feel slow or repetitive. Some days, showing up is the hardest part as we're busy, hit plateaus and at times can doubt whether it's working.

That's why practicing together matters so much as it is about sustaining each other through the ups and downs of learning. Below are some ideas which might be helpful in keeping the momentum of your practice going:

### Month 1

#### **Grounding and Foundations. Setting Goals and Intentions**

**Why it matters:** Tangible progress keeps morale high! Having a target or intention helps to keep accountability and motivation as it gives you a reason why you are practicing (Locke & Latham, 2002). Having a group intention also helps to build group togetherness and know you are doing something as a team (Carron et al., 1985).

**How?** Developing a S.M.A.R.T goal may be helpful. S.M.A.R.T stands for: **Specific Measurable Achievable Realistic Timeframe** (Doran, 1981).

e.g. *"Each month, group members will learn and practice at least one new mindfulness technique (e.g., body scan, loving-kindness, mindful walking) and reflect on its impact during the final session of the month."*

#### **Weekly ideas:**

- **Week 1:** Introductions + shared intention setting + goals
- **Week 2:** Guided breath meditation + check-in
- **Week 3:** Body scan + reflective journaling
- **Week 4:** Silent practice + group sharing

Group goals have a robust effect on group performance, with an effect size of 80%. Meaning, groups with a clear, challenging goal, are 80% more likely to perform well (Kleingeld, 2011)

"Goal setting and motivation. Group practice is good because you set aside that time every week, continuing practice seems more difficult, the intention may be there but life demands get in the way."

## Month 2

### **Mindfulness in Daily Life. Integrating practice into the everyday.**

**Why it matters:** Bringing awareness into everyday moments, enhances practice, can bring more enjoyment to day-to-day activities and promotes neurobiological changes in the brain (Calderone et al., 2024).

**How?** Mindful walking, eating, transitions and focused mindfulness to household activities.

#### **Weekly ideas:**

- **Week 1:** Mindful walking + nature connection
- **Week 2:** Mindful eating experience
- **Week 3:** Noticing habits – journaling and discussion
- **Week 4:** Group challenge – choose a daily activity to do mindfully for a week

## Month 3

### **Working with Thoughts & the Inner Critic**

**Why it matters:** Our inner critics or judgements can be harsh and unfair. If left unchecked, these narratives can undermine our confidence, increase stress and contribute to us feeling bad about ourselves. Spending time to notice thoughts as thoughts and not facts, can help develop distance between us and our thoughts. Learning we aren't just our thoughts, but much more. (Tobin & Dunkley 2021)

**How?** Thought awareness, becoming an observer, distancing self from thoughts, inner dialogue.

#### **Weekly ideas:**

- **Week 1:** Noticing thoughts (labelling practice), Mindfulness of Thoughts practice.
- **Week 2:** Inner critic exploration, noticing content and tone of inner thoughts.
- **Week 3:** Reframing with self-compassion, finding new ways to frame thoughts or talk to ourselves that fosters kindness and fairness.
- **Week 4:** Journalling + group dialogue

## Month 4

### Emotions and Compassion

**Why it matters:** Practicing compassion helps to build empathy for yourself and others, reducing anxiety, stress and can lift low mood (Leaviss & Uttley, 2015). It can also improve sleep, immunity and overall physical health (Philips & Hine, 2021).

**How?:** Loving-kindness meditations, RAIN (Recognise, Allow, Investigate, Nurture), writing down emotions.

#### **Weekly ideas:**

- **Week 1:** Loving-kindness meditation
- **Week 2:** Working with difficult emotions (RAIN or similar)
- **Week 3:** Pair sharing – practicing mindful listening
- **Week 4:** Compassion for self and others

## Month 5

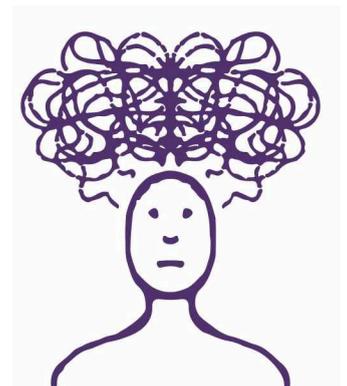
### Deepening Silence and Self-Inquiry

**Why it matters:** Embracing stillness and self-awareness helps to feel grounded and more in touch with yourself and the present moment. Helps to slow the brain and builds internal calmness and trust (Kieran et al., 2016).

**How?** Longer sits, silent sessions, self-inquiry, silent retreats.

#### **Weekly ideas:**

- **Week 1:** 20–30 minute silent meditation or mindfulness of breath practice.
- **Week 2:** Inquiry practice (e.g., “What am I feeling right now?”, “What is coming up for me in this silence?”, “What is my body trying to tell me?”)
- **Week 3:** Self-guided meditation (each member brings one)
- **Week 4:** Mini silent retreat (1–2 hrs), extending your practice group or meeting in person



## Month 6

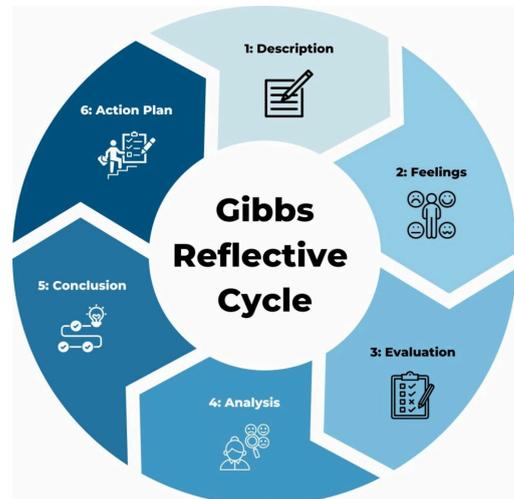
### Reflect and Review. What's working, what could be an area for switching things up

**Why does it matter:** Taking time to review how things are going allows the group to evolve and adjust in a meaningful way. Helps to give space to any unhelpful habits and gives a chance for rotating group roles (Kozlowski, 2018). Refresh, reconnect and realign for another 6 months.

**How?:** Can use a reflective model such as Gibb's Reflective Model (Gibbs, 1988).

Looking back over the last 6 months:

- What have been the experiences? **(Descriptive)**
- How did people feel about these experiences? **(Emotional impact)**
- What did people think went well or didn't go well? **(Evaluation)**
- Group discussion about the different pros and cons **(Analysis)**
- What conclusions can be made from this? **(Conclusion)**
- What are we going to do next? **(Action plan)**



### Weekly ideas:

- **Week 1:** Looking back – what have you learned?
- **Week 2:** Group visioning – what do you want to carry forward?
- **Week 3:** Creating personal and group practice plans
- **Week 4:** Closing circle – appreciations + celebration

## Need Support?

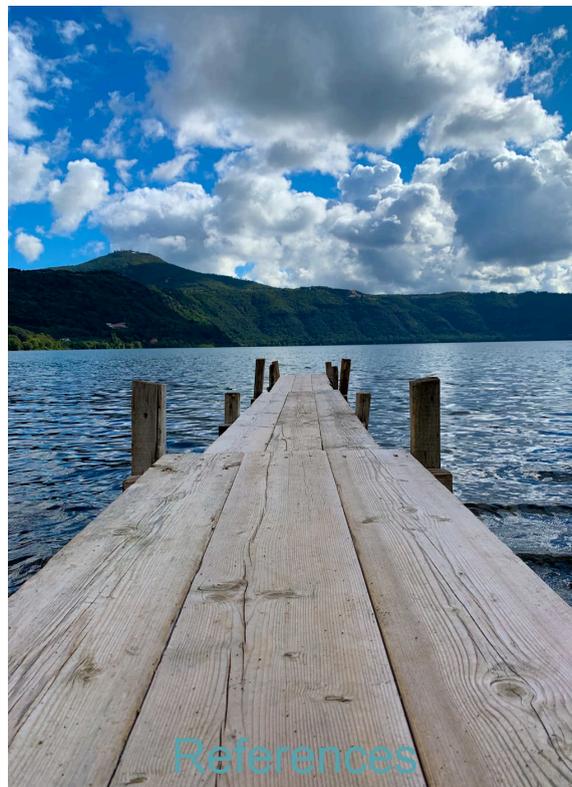
At any point in your group you need support with setting things up, technological challenges, or have any questions please contact The Mindful Life Group on

[info@the-mindful-life.com](mailto:info@the-mindful-life.com)

# Over To You

## The Guest House - Rumi

This being human is a guest house.  
Every morning a new arrival.  
A joy, a depression, a meanness,  
some momentary awareness comes  
as an unexpected visitor.  
Welcome and entertain them all!  
Even if they're a crowd of sorrows,  
who violently sweep your house  
empty of its furniture,  
still, treat each guest honorably.  
He may be clearing you out  
for some new delight.  
The dark thought, the shame, the  
malice,  
meet them at the door laughing,  
and invite them in.  
Be grateful for whoever comes,  
because each has been sent  
as a guide from beyond.



If you're interested in where the information for this booklet came from, please see the list below

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