



# Mindfulness and Solution Focused Hypnotherapy

Mindfulness is becoming increasingly popular at the moment as a way of reducing stress and is something which Solution Focused Hypnotherapy clients may ask us about in our therapy sessions. As such, here is a brief overview of Mindfulness, where Trevor Eddolls explores its similarities and differences with SFH.

Mindfulness originated as part of Buddhist practice, and was popularized by Jon Kabat-Zinn with his Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) programme.

It can be thought of as a mental state that can be achieved by focusing a person's awareness on the present moment, while at the same time they calmly notice and accept their feelings, thoughts, and bodily sensations.

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It's not easy to do because people tend to start thinking about things, rather than focusing their awareness on, for example, just their breathing. The three key concepts of Mindfulness are awareness, non-judgement, and living in the present. And that means stopping the mind reflecting on the past or projecting (imagining) the future. With Mindfulness, the aim is for a person to cultivate a positive and grateful attitude and so can let go of the need to be right.

Mindfulness is meant to help an individual by training their brain (so introducing the concepts of neuroplasticity which we may talk about in the consulting room), improving relationships, boosting creativity, reducing depression, reducing chronic pain, giving deeper meaning to life, reducing stress and anxiety, controlling addiction, regulating eating habits, and increasing happiness

So, does it fit nicely with Solution Focused Hypnotherapy or not? Is there anything we can learn from Mindfulness that will make our practice better? Like all these things, the answer is yes - and no! Clearly Mindfulness is not goal-oriented, where-as that's the type of hypnotherapy we do.

Mindfulness is not fond of people dwelling in the past or negatively predicting the future and that's similar to our model of helping the prefrontal cortex being positive and in control. Much of our work helps clients to relax, and relaxation is often a side-effect of Mindfulness. Mindfulness is all about accepting things the way they are, whereas we are trying to help the client make positive changes. As students of SFH will remember from one of the supplied scripts from the CPHT course: "Yesterday has gone, and with it is gone all the influences that could make it different. Tomorrow is but a myth...but today, this very moment, all is real and for this moment we live."

Another aspect of Mindfulness which complements SFH's work is "urge" surfing. This can be used to experience the cravings / urges in a new way and to "ride them out" until they go away. Remember that urges pass by themselves, imagine that the urges you feel are like ocean waves that arrive, crest, and subside. They are small to begin with, get bigger, and finally break up and dissipate.

It helps smokers resist the urge to light up by understanding that the urge will quickly pass – certainly it is a key part of the SFH message in the stop smoking sessions that we run! It is also designed to a "phobic" to "surf" through those urges. So, like SFH, Mindfulness can be about being positive and moving away from negativity – after all, our sessions are all about what's been good and so expecting to hear all those all important good points at the next session.

In many ways, Mindfulness is about being in control and thinking with the intellectual part of the brain – again something we do. With Mindfulness, it is often about noticing feelings, thoughts, or behaviours, and being in control enough to dissociate from some of them and so just accept them as being there.

But there are crucial differences from SFH. The thing to realize about Mindfulness is that is that it isn't a technique because, fundamentally, Mindfulness isn't goal-oriented! Mindfulness includes a number of techniques that can be used, but, if a

person practices Mindfulness to achieve a goal, the Mindfulness itself has less potency. It's a difficult idea, certainly. But if you use Mindfulness to achieve a result, you are introducing a bias (think of it like a scientist trying to see what the result of an experiment will be) and that means you are not trying Mindfulness wholeheartedly. In short, relaxation is very often a side effect of a meditation, but it shouldn't be the goal of meditation.

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*Personally, I enjoy Mindfulness, but I am unsure whether it has added any more tools to my Solution Focused Hypnotherapy toolbox, or if it provides any greater understanding about how people's minds work.*

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