

“Is this the right course and/or the right time for me to attend?”

The 8-week MBCT course we offer at the OMC is aimed at the general public and is not helpful or suitable for everyone. When you register for the course you will be asked a series of questions in the application form that will help us determine whether or not the course is likely to be safe and beneficial for you at this time. In some circumstances we may suggest that you consider either waiting a while to take the course, or that you explore other options, including more specialist mindfulness-based programmes designed for people experiencing specific difficulties, or support from a GP or mental health professional. Below we outline some of the issues that we have found can limit or prevent people from benefitting from our public MBCT courses. Of course, everyone's situation is slightly different and we encourage you to speak to the course lead if, after reading the information below, you have any remaining concerns or questions about the suitability of the course for you.

Mania, Suicidal Thoughts and Self-Harm

The 8-week MBCT course offered by the OMC is **not suitable** for you if you have experienced a manic or hypomanic episode in the past six months, if you are currently self-harming or if you are currently experiencing suicidal thoughts. It isn't that mindfulness will not be helpful for people with these conditions – in fact we know it might very well be, but it would need to be delivered in a more specialist group. If you are feeling suicidal we would strongly recommend you speak to your GP or another mental health professional. We are unable to give specific advice or support to those with individual mental health problems. **If you do need to speak to someone urgently, the Samaritans offer emotional support 24 hours a day on 08457 90 90 90.**

Alcohol and Drug Use

Practicing mindfulness through attendance at an 8-week MBCT Course involves completion of up to an hour of daily home meditation practice and other activities and it is essential that this practice takes place when your consciousness is not impaired. If you are drinking a lot of alcohol or using other drugs please consider carefully whether you will be able to find time each day to complete your practice when you are not under the influence of alcohol, drugs or their after affects. If this is likely to be difficult to you then the MBCT course will **not be suitable** for you at this time.

If any of the situations described below apply to you, please contact the Course Lead before applying omcadmin@psych.ox.ac.uk

Current Depression

If you are currently depressed, to such an extent that it is difficult for you to manage your everyday life, it is probably not the right time for you to do the course. We know from experience that people coming on the course need to be reasonably well. The course involves some daily home practice and finding the motivation and energy to do this whilst feeling very depressed will probably be too challenging.

Recent bereavement – in the past year

If you are recently bereaved it is helpful to have come to terms with some of the grief before starting an 8-week course. It can be difficult to recognise and work with pre-existing and more longstanding habits of mind, when the bereavement is still very preoccupying. The 1 year period is a notional time (and people will differ a great deal in when they feel ready to begin a course) but our experience suggests it is often helpful to have gone through all the ‘significant’ dates of the person who has died before moving on to start something like an MBCT course.

Other ongoing psychological treatment

MBCT is not a ‘therapy’ as such. However it is often confusing or impractical to engage in two ‘psychological treatments’ at the same time. MBCT involves a big time commitment and adding it on top of another ongoing therapy may be difficult.

Stressful life events – current

Taking an MBCT course, strange though it may sound, can at times be quite stressful. There is a big time commitment, since in addition to the weekly sessions and whole Saturday session you will be encouraged to do daily practices at home which take about an hour each day in total. If there’s too much going on in your life right now (change of job, job loss, loss of home, moving, relationship breakdown, too many work commitments etc.) adding MBCT to the mix may not help.

Insulin-dependent Diabetes

During periods of meditation the body may become relaxed and for some people, over time, meditation reduces stress. This may in turn have an effect on blood glucose and insulin requirements and may potentially result in a need for adjustments to pattern of insulin administration and dosage. Please let your GP or other healthcare professional know that you are doing the course and discuss this possibility with them.