



## SUSSEX MINDFULNESS CENTRE

MINDFULNESS AND COMPASSION WITH INTEGRITY

Spring 2019

### Interview with Steve Hickman

EXEC DIRECTOR OF THE CENTRE FOR MINDFUL SELF-COMPASSION

**Steve has taught mindfulness-based stress reduction for 19 years and is a trainer of teachers of MBSR and MBCT and MSC.**

**Question:** *We're delighted that you are coming to the UK in February 2019 to run an MSC teacher training programme and an Inquiry masterclass—what do you enjoy most about running them?*

**Steve:** My greatest passion is in training teachers of mindfulness and self-compassion. The Mindful Self-Compassion program is a life-changing experience for many people. The practice of self-compassion can often be the key to unlocking longstanding suffering that seems so hard to overcome.

**Q:** *What is your daily routine to ensure self-compassion?*

**SH:** I practice standard mindfulness sitting meditation most days and tend to guide myself in that practice with a soothing inner tone. I also find that practicing loving kindness, for myself and for others.

**Q:** *Your role is to support the development of mindful self-compassion around the world. Can you update us on this?*

**SH:** We are making great strides in places like Vietnam, Kenya and other locations through the kindness of others who support us. In the UK, we are lucky to have the SMC as a host and organiser. I teach MSC in cultures around the world and I have yet to encounter a group not in greater need of self-kindness and self-compassion. We have a delightfully robust team of MSC teachers in the UK who share the program in various ways, but I hope in February we can extend those efforts!

**Q:** *During meditation you refer to the song, 'I never promised you a rose garden'. Can you elaborate?*

**SH:** Mindfulness and compassion are not about eliminating suffering or routing out pain or excising anger. Think of these experiences like gravity. Gravity can have negative effects (like dropping our mobile phones) but one does not wake up saying "Damn it! I'm stuck to the earth!". Instead, we find a way to

relate differently to gravity to cushion its blow and use it to our advantage.

**Q:** *What do you feel is most useful about your mindfulness teaching and practice?*

**SH:** It allows me to maintain perspective on the challenges that arise in my life and to help me see my own reactivity against a background of calm abiding. This helps me make clearer and more wise decisions.

**Q:** *What are you working on at the moment?*

**SH:** Our Centre at the University of California was just awarded a two-year contract to teach mindfulness, resilience and self-compassion to personnel in the US Department of Homeland security nationwide.

**Q:** *What motivates you?*

**SH:** Meeting and working with new people in new places—it's all about the people.

**Q:** *What are your future plans?*

**SH:** I'm on a long glide path toward retirement, but it's a LONG one! I hope to finish a book in the next year that is a reflective guide to becoming a teacher of mindfulness-based programs.

**Q:** *If you had one tip for well-being what would it be?*

**SH:** Let go of what isn't serving you and can't be changed in the moment.

**Q:** *At Sussex Partnership, we work with people with anxiety and mental health problems, if you have one key message to help, what would it be?*

**SH:** The number one barrier to people being relieved of their suffering is their own belief that they are alone and unique in their problems. These "problems" are and will be experienced by millions of others. Open yourself up to sharing what you are going through with a physician, a friend, a therapist, or a mindfulness teacher. You'll be glad you did.



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### HIGHLIGHTS

- Hold the date! Sussex Mindfulness Centre's forthcoming Annual Conference on 25 October 2019

Created by Kathryn Gjorgjieva (Psychology Graduate Intern) and Paula Bellers (Communications Officer)

## INTERVIEW WITH KARUNAVIRA AND ROBERT MARX

**Karunavira is retiring from SMC Mindfulness training. Here we look back at his mindfulness journey.**

**Robert:** How did you move from teaching to mindfulness teaching?

**Karunavira:** I resigned as a Head in East Sussex in order to pursue Buddhist studies and retreats without having to fit them into holiday time, so I took the decision to join the Buddhist order and pursue that path. Many years later, I realised a lot of my Buddhist and meditation teaching lined up with the new secular approaches (MBCT approaches). I saw a possible integration of these two parts of my life—the teaching part and the Buddhist part—so I was very happy to discover that Bangor University ran a Master's course in Mindfulness and I talked to various other people into joining me there.

**RM:** Were there any particular teachers who inspired you or who you learnt from?

**K:** At Bangor University, definitely Rebecca Crane. Plus David Elias, who was a Rogerian counsellor at the same time as I was doing counselling training. Carl Rogers was a very big figure and he exemplified that approach to teaching and helping people.

**RM:** Becoming a person-centred counsellor?

**K:** Yes. After I trained as a person-centred counsellor and mindfulness teacher, I had this sort of vision of forming a non-profit company which would use mindfulness to help people like carers, parents and older people in the community. Which is what Taravajra and I did in starting Mindful Health—applying skills and knowledge from Buddhism into the secular world to help people.

**RM:** Mindful Health has been involved in SMC training from the beginning. What have you enjoyed most in the training process?

**K:** Inventing, creating, making, training days, retreats... I like making and then seeing how it works. I enjoy seeing people “getting it” and I know they will go on to help others. It is a bit like my teacher once said: “you either give people fish, or you give them fishing rods”. I suppose I have been making lots of fishing rods to help well-trained people getting out there.

**RM:** Your contribution to the training has been huge and people can really feel your warmth and kindness in the training. What do you think is the most valuable aspect of the training?

**K:** I think it's seeing the personal growth of the trainees and the sense of group and community that develops.

**RM:** What qualities do you think are important in being a good mindfulness teacher?

**K:** Humility, genuineness, a clear kindness and integrity comes to mind. A genuine sense of wanting to help others by offering and practicing oneself and teaching others... so compassion practice.



*Mindfulness Foundation teacher training cohort 2018*

**RM:** How do you feel about the way the SMC has developed and where do you think it should focus its energies on now?

**K:** I don't want to be too controversial, but I see danger in the mindfulness process getting more diluted, so it should lead in keeping to the core curriculum of MBSR and MBCT. I hope that the SMC gradually builds a secure base and acts as a heart for the wider community in the South East. I don't think it needs to expand its teaching curricular, so just continue with what it's doing and hang in there during difficult times. It would be lovely if it could help implement mindfulness in organisations, like the NHS, for a wide range of vulnerabilities, and in local communities through MBCTL to help local communities and organisations flourish, rather than just get by.

**RM:** What are your plans once you retire from training here?

**K:** I'll still be doing a lot of mindfulness teaching and training, including various projects abroad. I also plan to give time to my tai-chi practice and painting. I don't know really, but I'll have a bit of spare time to explore that.

**RM:** How exciting and thank you for all that you've given to us.

**K:** Thank you to the SMC for being there. I need the SMC to help me be creative and help me to help others. Without it, it would have been very difficult to have done what I did.



## MINDFULNESS NETWORK

The Mindfulness Network offers a range of services, which include: secular retreats; supervision; mindfulness teacher training; self-compassion and compassionate living retreats and training courses; personal practice mentoring; and an eight-week MBSR distance learning course.

For more information about the work of The Mindfulness Network, please visit: <https://www.mindfulness-network.org/>.



## OUR UNSUNG HERO: RUTH SEQUEIRA

**Ruth is a Mindfulness Teacher and Primary Mental Health Worker at the Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) in Hastings, East Sussex. Ruth has a longstanding interest in mindfulness and meditation and is passionate about increasing access to mindfulness courses in different populations. Ruth facilitates adapted Mindfulness courses for adolescents and parents/carers of CAMHS service users. Ruth also facilitates Mindfulness courses for professionals working with young people in the education, voluntary and health sectors and for Sussex Partnership staff.**

**Question:** *Please tell us more about your programme of mindfulness for parents and carers?*

**Ruth:** I ran a six-week adapted Mindfulness Course for Parents and Carers of young people with emotional distress and/or challenging behaviour as part of the Discovery College programme. Parenting can be rewarding and joyful, but can also be extremely demanding and stressful, particularly when a child has additional needs or is experiencing a significant level of emotional distress. I wanted to offer this course as a support to these parents, and also to acknowledge that as family members we all affect each other, and as parents we are always modelling something. I hoped that by teaching mindfulness practices to parents and carers this would have a positive impact on their stress levels, mood, sense of resilience and ability to manage difficulties, and that in turn this would also have a positive impact on the young people under their care. I was lucky enough to be able to run the course in partnership with a parent who had previously attended a similar course and who acted as an additional source of support and experience for the participants.

**Q:** *What's the feedback from the courses so far?*

**RS:** So far we have run one pilot course for parents, we are planning to offer a further course this winter for parents of CAMHS service users and for carers of young people in the Looked After Children CAMHS service. We are also continuing to run courses for adolescents with

mental health difficulties and in some cases both adolescents and their parents have taken courses. The feedback for the course was extremely positive. Participants found the course helpful both in terms of looking after their own wellbeing, and in helping them manage the challenges of parenting. Parents commented on how much of a positive experience it

was for them to be recognised as individuals, to have their struggles acknowledged, and for someone to be interested in their wellbeing rather than solely focussing on their child. They greatly valued the opportunity to meet other parents in similar situations and with similar struggles, and the mutual support that was offered.

**Q:** *What do you enjoy most about your mindfulness work?*

**RS:** I love the sense of common humanity that is (re)discovered during a mindfulness course. The realisation that other people also have similar struggles, destructive thoughts, and difficult feelings towards themselves is in itself often immensely reassuring and supportive for people. I continue to feel touched and amazed by the changes in people as they go through the mindfulness course.

**Q:** *What bit of your mindfulness teaching and practice do you feel is most useful to children and families?*

**RS:** I think the realisation that we generally don't have to react to things immediately, whether that be a thought in our head or a difficult situation, is simple but revelatory. Learning to acknowledge that we are being triggered, and to take some conscious breaths and possibly bring in a sense of kindness BEFORE responding, can have huge effects – and of course in that moment of anxiety, distress, rage, humiliation is not always easy to do – hence the need for practice!

**Q:** *At Sussex Partnership, we work with many families and carers with anxiety and mental health problems – please give a key message that could be useful?*

**RS:** We often talk to ourselves in a way which is way meaner than we'd ever talk to anyone else. We could all benefit from being kinder to ourselves, especially when life is difficult, and the more we can take care of ourselves the more resourced we are to be able to be kind to others. Slow things down, take time to look after yourself, remember the fun stuff is important too!



**“... the realisation that we generally don't have to react to things immediately ... is simple but revelatory ”**

## WALK SLOWLY

**By Danna Faulds**

It only takes a reminder to breathe, a moment to be still, and just like that, something in me settles, softens, makes space for imperfection. The harsh voice of judgement drops to a whisper and I remember again that life isn't a relay race; that we will all cross the finish line; that waking up to life is what we were born for. As many times as I forget, catch myself charging forward without even knowing where I'm going, that many times I can make the choice to stop, to breathe, and be, and walk slowly into the mystery.



## OUR VISION

At Sussex Mindfulness Centre we aim to improve wellbeing through mindfulness. We bring together mindfulness practice, research and training. We do this for the benefit of people with mental or physical health challenges and the wider community. We want to learn more about who and how mindfulness can help. We have heartfelt values: helping those in need, with compassion, based on evidence.

### SMC 7th Annual Conference

#### New Frontiers in Mindfulness-Based Approaches

Friday 25 October 2019

[BOOK HERE](#)

To find out more about masterclasses or training please contact the Sussex Mindfulness Centre.

Twitter:

[@SMCmindful SPFT](#)

Email:

[SMC@sussexpartnership.nhs.uk](mailto:SMC@sussexpartnership.nhs.uk)

Or visit:

[www.sussexmindfulnesscentre.nhs.uk](http://www.sussexmindfulnesscentre.nhs.uk)



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## RESEARCH UPDATE

### STAFF WELL-BEING PROJECT 2019

This year's *Health Education England – Kent Sussex and Surrey Staff Wellbeing Project* is well on the way. The project aims to improve the wellbeing of healthcare staff following the promising findings of last year's randomised controlled trial. Further funding has been granted for 4 Mindfulness courses and 4 Wellbeing Workshops to be implemented in each county. So far, we have had an overwhelming response and interest in the scheme, with 18 different trusts across KSS participating and over 1,600 applications for places. Each space was allocated on a first come first served basis with some courses oversubscribed within hours of release. The project will be reviewed later this year. For more information about the project and on how sign up, please visit: [https://qsharingeu.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_4NphqtAOJXXv3Br](https://qsharingeu.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_4NphqtAOJXXv3Br).

## UPCOMING MASTERCLASSES, EVENTS & COURSES

### MASTERCLASSES

**11 June 2019** | [MBCT: The Evolving Story](#)

A day of unfolding of the story of MBCT research and practice with Rebecca Crane and Clara Strauss

**28 June 2019** | [A Day of Exploring Human Stress: Maps, Territories and Navigational Tools](#)

A day to deepen your understanding of the multifaceted concept of stress with Bill Young

**20 September 2019** | [Buddhist Foundations of Mindfulness](#)

A day with Christina Feldman to explore the origins and intentions of mindfulness-based programmes

**4 October 2019** | [Relational Mindfulness](#)

Join us for a masterclass with Rosalie Dores: cultivating a core competency in mindfulness-based teaching

**15 November 2019** | [Exploring Mindful Movement Practice](#)

Join us for a masterclass with Taravajra to deepen understanding of personal mindful movement practice

For more information about the masterclasses, please refer to the SMC website and book by emailing: [SMC@sussexpartnership.nhs.uk](mailto:SMC@sussexpartnership.nhs.uk). £110 and concessions apply to SMC teachers, advocates and associates.

### COMPASSION—ORIENTATED EVENTS

**22–23 November 2019** | [2-day Core Skills Workshop in Mindful Self-Compassion](#)

A workshop led by Chris Germer and Vanessa Hope, where participants will directly experience self-compassion and learn practices that evoke self-compassion in daily life

### SMC ANNUAL CONFERENCE

**25 October 2019** | [New Frontiers in Mindfulness-Based Approaches](#)

Save the date! A full day of practice sessions, keynote speakers and workshops at Friends Meeting House in Brighton. £90, concessions apply to SMC teachers, advocates and associates. For more information and to book a place, please visit the [SMC website](#).

### DROP INS

Drop-ins are held on the first working Monday of the month, from 5pm to 6pm, at the Sussex Education Centre on the Millview Hospital site in Hove. They are free of charge and open to anyone who has both completed an 8-week MBCT or MBSR, and who is either a current or ex-service user. Drop ins at Arun house, Swandean, Millview and Brighton General Hospital are for Sussex Partnership staff only and do not require previous mindfulness experience. Please bring your own mat, cushion / stool and blanket if possible. For more information on drop ins and retreats, please visit the [SMC website](#).

### RETREATS

Day retreats are held on Saturdays from 10am to 4pm at Sussex Education Centre on the Mill View Hospital site. If you have attended an 8-week MBCT or MBSR course and are a current or previous Sussex Partnership service user, current staff member or current Sussex Mindfulness Centre trainee, please just turn up - no booking or payment is required. For more information, please visit the [SMC website](#).

Please note, applications for 2020 trainings will be on the website soon. If you have any enquiries in the meantime, please contact [smc@sussexpartnership.nhs.uk](mailto:smc@sussexpartnership.nhs.uk).

