

MIND MANAGEMENT MASTERY

CERTIFICATION COURSE

MMM FOR MOOD MANAGEMENT

Use your mind to manage your emotions.

Introduction

Mental health can be measured by the level of vulnerability we can safely tolerate. Typically, we either push our emotions away and become detached from them, or we give our emotions too much power and become unsafe. In order to attain optimum mental health we need to be in charge of our emotions in a way that allows us maximum vulnerability without becoming destabilised.

It is through our emotions that we connect with the very essence of being alive. Love, joy, wonder, warmth, comfort and laughter are emotions that make life worth living. Grief, anger, hurt, sadness, loss and anxiety are emotions that give life its substance. With mind management we can cultivate our connection to these emotions enhancing our power to make ourselves happy and building our power to use our emotions in a functional way that facilitates our journey through life rather than reduces it.

MMM for mood management involves two functions: Connect and Protect.

Connect. This might be easy for some people who readily experience their emotions but for others it might be difficult. Many people have learnt to disconnect from their emotions, so this part of the process will be the most difficult. Your focus this week is to deliberately open your heart and connect with what you are feeling. It may be extremely hard to let yourself be vulnerable, to open up and allow yourself to be vulnerable. Quite possibly a life time's work has gone into building your defences, so it can be very difficult to put your weapons down.

The practice of mindfulness can help you connect. During the week connect mindfully with wonder, love and laughter. It is always possible to experience wonder. You can even feel wonder washing the dishes. Just stop and look at a tree.

Smell food cooking. Touch a loved one's skin. Look into the eyes of a child. It is there. Even in the midst of great suffering, we can connect to wonder. Love is also easy. We get stuck on wanting to be loved but if we turn it around and focus on loving then we have power. Try to love what you are doing. Sometimes it might be a bit hard. Loving washing up may not be that easy but with mind management you can even love cleaning the toilet. (Theoretically anyway!) Laughter is something else you can readily generate. A sense of irony, an ability to laugh at the absurd and even in suffering it is sometimes possible to find a smile. Laughing at yourself is phenomenally powerful. Amuse yourself!

It is also important to connect to the so-called negative emotions. Sadness, grief, hurt, anger, disappointment, anxiety and fear don't feel so good but they of themselves are part of the richness of life and if used in a powerful way, can take us to places of more depth, wisdom and understanding. Our reaction to these emotions can result in our becoming detached, overwhelmed, sorry for ourselves, bitter, controlling and/or angry but they can also be used to generate wisdom, depth, substance and compassion. With mind management we can learn to manage the negative emotions such that they facilitate our lives rather than define them.

Protect. Having connected, we need to take care of ourselves. Critical to any kind of success is the ability to be in charge of your emotions in an effective way that enhances the quality and direction of your life. The way we take charge of our emotions in MMM is through protection. We need to learn to protect ourselves as we might protect a child. We need to keep ourselves safe. This is particularly important for those who have become overwhelmed by their emotions. We want to be able to use our minds to manage our emotions, dissipating unhelpful emotions while feeling the wonder of being alive.

But first the basics of MMM.

The fundamental principles of MMM will turn up in every course. These are the underwriting themes of mind management which you will practice over and over in order to achieve mind mastery.

- Develop your transcendent self
- Be Self-Centred
- Be Kind to yourself

THE FUNDAMENTALS

DEVELOP YOUR TRANSCENDENT SELF

During this week observe your emotional self. Use your mind's eye to develop your ability to be the object and subject of your emotional experience. We are the subject of our emotional experiences because we feel the feeling, it is our experience. Being the object of our emotional experiences, on the other hand, is a skill we can develop

with mind management. You can see yourself as you are feeling what you are feeling. Your transcendent self can observe how you are reacting, which in turn creates the opportunity for you to use your mind management to manage the emotion rather than have it manage you.

It might seem like semantics but it is important to remember that your transcendent self observes from a disinterested place. Your transcendent self makes the observation of the emotion, it simply observes the process, it does not get involved in the rights and wrongs, the causes or the management of the emotion, it simply observes the emotional space you have entered. It can be done anywhere, at any time and takes but a flick of consciousness. In a second you can go to your transcendent self and then return to your physical self. Whatever the circumstances, take a breath, step out of yourself and observe the situation and then come back and do what needs to be done. In that second you create a distance between you and your reactions and that can make all the difference. Increasingly, as your life allows, you may be more able to spend time in your transcendent self but it is worth noting that it only takes a second and can therefore be achieved in almost all circumstances.

You use your mind management to connect with your transcendent self, it will not happen without deliberation, but it needs to be separated from the mind management we use to deal with our emotions from a rational base. Awareness and reason are separate functions. Awareness is simply about observation and needs to be kept out of the processes involved in dealing with the emotions. I can be aware of myself feeling and then I can be aware of myself dealing with the emotions. In both cases the awareness is transcendent. Don't worry too much about this point if it is difficult to comprehend right now, just getting perspective, that alone is a good start and you can fine tune at a later time.

BE SELF-CENTRED

MMM for mood management is about developing your internal locus of control. An internal locus of control with regard to managing our moods means focussing on effectively managing your emotional reactions. It is what is going on inside of you that is the object of our attention. We need to identify the triggers and we need to problem solve but the focus of this module is on the effect that the trigger has on you, noting your reactions and applying your positive constructive prospecting (PCP). Your emotions are yours to deal with. No matter what the trigger, and no matter who was right and who was wrong, the advent of dissonance is your problem and demands mind management to achieve equanimity and this is best done, where possible, before PCP.

BE KIND TO YOURSELF

In the introduction to mind management we looked at the significance of being kind to yourself and how critical it is to your developing mastery over your mind. Doing

MMM for mood management we will develop our understanding of the significance of being kind to yourself with regard to the effective management of your emotions.

So, now let's move on the MMM for mood management.

MMM FOR MOOD MANAGEMENT

Here's how to do it: **CONNECT, PROTECT, PROSPECT.**

CONNECT

- Slow down
- Remove anxiety relieving objects (ARO's)
- Connect

SLOW DOWN

This part of your practice is likely to be the most forgettable. Anxiety comes with a certain urgency. If you were running away from a lion and I asked you to slow down, you'd think I was nuts. Slowing down is what we do afterwards. The urgency anxiety creates in us makes us want to be busy doing things. By keeping busy we can avoid our feelings. So when you slow down you are more likely to connect with yourself and more likely to respond rather than react to whatever is happening. Ironically, slowing down can help you be more effective in dealing with your problems because instead of having knee jerk reactions to triggers, we have considered responses which usually will be more effective in dealing with whatever is happening. So slow down your speech and slow down your walking, slow down your driving, slow down your eating. Unless of course a lion is chasing you!

REMOVE ARO'S

MMM for mood management is about connecting with your emotions from a safe place. In order to do this, you need to remove the distractions you use to avoid connecting with your emotions.

Just a reminder: an ARO is an anxiety relieving object. An ARO is anything you attach to that helps relieve your anxiety. ARO's include substances we might use, behaviours that we engage in that are of little value, and they also involve thoughts and ideas we attach to in order to distract ourselves from other problems that we want to avoid confronting. ARO's includes alcohol, tobacco, other drugs, gambling, computer games, comfort eating, day dreaming, ineffectual worrying, resentments, ruminations, justification, relentless thoughts, talking too much about nothing, nonsense television shows, intellectualising, and any other bad habits such as counting, picking, checking and even fidgeting. Please note: if you are physically

dependent on alcohol or another substance and want to stop using this substance during the course you may need to consult your GP.

ARO's can be difficult to identify because they may be making us feel bad rather than good. So if I am running a line of self-pity, I might be making myself feel bad which may make it hard to understand that I am running that conversation in my head to help me manage my anxiety. This is really deep stuff! It comes down to understanding my motivation for the self-pity. I am creating this way of thinking in my own head. I am doing it to myself. Why? Why would I deliberately generate thoughts in my own head that distress me? Rigorous honesty, drilling down a bit into how tricky I am, might show me that there is some sort of payoff in creating myself as a victim. During the course you are likely to better understand your ARO's. For now, identify those that you can and deliberately put them aside.

You want to manage your mood with your mind. You want to experience your emotions, you want to feel your feelings and not avoid them, so take away the distractions you use to help you hide away from what is going on inside of you. For one week identify and contain the distractions you use to help you avoid your emotions.

Observe what happens when you remove these distractions. If you experience an increase in discomfort, agitation, restlessness or anxiety then you will see how these distractions have been being used in order to help you avoid your emotions. This is good. Really! You want to be able to mind manage your emotions and not be dependent on distractions. Be warned though, if you do get too distressed because you are having difficulty with your ability to mind manage the feelings then by all means take a distractor! You need to decide for yourself how naked you want to get.

Essential to mmm for mood management is the need to connect with our emotions from a safe place. Mental health can be measured by the level of vulnerability we can safely tolerate. We want to remove ARO's but we need to learn to take care of ourselves, we need to keep ourselves safe. If however, you can manage your emotions and actually manage to dissipate the unhelpful feelings without reaching for a distractor then you are on your way to mind management mastery.

CONNECT TO YOURSELF – FEEL YOUR EMOTIONS

As you draw your attention to yourself connect with your experiences. Run body scans, feel your aches and pains. Notice your emotions. Feel them. Whenever possible, stop and feel what it feels like to be you right now. Increasingly be aware of the subtle emotions, the dissonance, the discord, the restlessness, the tides of anxiety and the rising frustrations. Equally notice when your mood lifts, when you smile, when you feel hopeful, when you connect with the wonderful and experience the joy. You are wanting to feel the good and the bad, you want to be able to manage the bad with your mind but you are also wanting to connect with the good because that, after

all, is the essence of life, to connect with the wonderful, to notice the glorious, to lift up your eyes and see beyond your suffering.

As you become increasingly mindful of your emotions you will notice the emotional effect of your environment. Notice how changes in your environment impact on you. Notice moments of rising anxiety. Notice the different effect of different people on you. Notice how you react to different situations. Notice how you respond when you look at the blue sky, when you touch a child, when you feel the sun on your skin, when you see someone you love, when you eat something. As much as possible, notice how you are responding to the life in front of you, good and bad.

Please note: if you have become detached from your emotions then during this week your focus will be on trying to connect with your experience of life. One of the most effective ways people disconnect from their emotions is to intellectualise them. Instead of feeling them, we think about them, analyse them, dissect them, understand them and work out what to do with them. All of this, however, convincing it might seem in terms of the sophisticated management of your emotions, may actually just be a defence, it is a way of avoiding your emotions. Your emotions may have so much power in your life you have become afraid of feeling them at all and one way of doing this that is highly deceptive, is to think about them instead. In mind management mastery for mood management we use our minds to connect with life, to open ourselves up to experiencing life as much as we dare. It is easy to work out which is which, if you are intellectualising then you will feel detached, conversely, if you are using your mind to connect, you will feel that connection.

It is equally the case that you might have become overwhelmed by your emotions. In this case you might have difficulty taking charge of them. Your task this week is to use your mind management to assert authority over your emotions. You cannot be successful if you let your emotions run your life. Your life will be lived as a reaction to your emotions and everything you do or say will involve a struggle to try and feel better. Your emotions are best described as the child in you. This child is absolutely open to experiencing the full range of emotions from joy to despair. It is such a fabulous part of you and absolutely connects you to the experience of being alive. It is bizarre that the intellectualisers have so disconnected themselves from the experience of life they may as well not be alive, they have created themselves as machines. You on the other hand, have the advantage of feeling your feelings but you need to take charge of them. Just like you would not let a child run riot in a supermarket (I hope) so you need to take charge of your child. Gently but firmly learn to comfort the screaming child and contain the raging the child by connecting with how you are feeling and using your mind management to take charge of the child in you just as you might a real child.

It is difficult to know whether you are managing your emotions in an effective way or you are avoiding your emotions in a defensive way. Increasingly, with mind management you will be able to experience your emotions without losing authority

over them but the way you assert authority over them makes all the difference. The distinction between control and protect allows us to distinguish between unhealthy and healthy management of that child inside of you.

PROTECT

- Introduction
- Identify triggers
- Identify micro-panics
- Self Soothe
- Regulate your breathing
- Use calming statements
- Practice the HALTS

INTRODUCTION

Mental health can be measured by the degree of vulnerability you can safely tolerate. How much vulnerability you can safely tolerate is dependent on your ability to manage your suffering. For the most part, we manage suffering defensively, by either externalising or internalising blame. We can rationalise, justify, defend, judge, ruminate, obsess, over-think, over analyse and end up angry, resentful, revengeful, aggressive, or turn it in on ourselves and become consumed with self-loathing, uncertainty, sorry for ourselves, sulky, petulant and end up chucking a tanty. All of these behaviours are done in order to try and manage our emotions. We don't do this stuff when we are happy, powerful, excited or inspired. We do it when we have been hurt.

Our transcendent awareness gives us the ability to see ourselves. I see me. This higher level of consciousness also allows us to take care of ourselves. Often we look outside ourselves for help, we want someone to love us which usually means that we want someone to take care of us, to validate us, to encourage us, to be on our side and to help us get through the bad times. For the most part, this is an unrealistic expectation and we frequently end up disappointed in the whole being loved thing. With MMM for mood management, we want to develop that transcendent part of you that can protect you. This part of you that is wise, understanding, gentle, forgiving, has good humour and best of all can always see the bigger perspective.

We can readily recognise the differences between the effective management of our emotions by considering the differences between a protective parent, an indulgent parent and a controlling parent. Our protective parent is able to assess the degree of vulnerability we can safely tolerate and when we become unsafe is able to take care of our self in an adult way which essentially includes helping us get back on to stable ground, able to move forward in a powerful way. If we are to be happy and

successful, then this aspect of mind management mastery is critical. Step out of judgement and control, step out of self pity, step out of blaming and go into protect. Take care of you, protect yourself.

Consider the difference between dealing effectively with your emotions as opposed to either dismissing them or indulging them. The emotions themselves are not the issue, it is how we manage them. Very often self-help programmes and even psychologists discriminate between positive and negative emotions as if the one is good and the other is bad. This is not the case. Anger, sadness, loneliness and grief are 'good' emotions if they express a reaction to a trigger. They are bad emotions if they are used to indulge in self-pity or excuse bad behaviour. If someone treats you badly, even if it is a slight insult, and you are practicing mind management, then it is good to allow yourself to feel the hurt, it is how you are feeling, you are feeling hurt and for you to acknowledge the hurt allows you to connect with your feelings and allows you the opportunity to make a rational decision about how you want to manage the emotion. If you dismiss the emotion, if you rationalise it away or repress it then you disallow your connection to your life. Alternatively, if you corrupt those feelings by generalising and catastrophizing you have misused the feelings to indulge in self-pity. The hurt which was a real, honest emotion has turned into self-pity.

Your mind management practice is about becoming aware of your reaction to your triggers and then practicing PCP with an intervening variable of kindness. Now that might sound complicated but you are probably getting the gist of it by now. Use your mind management to catch the feeling. If that feeling is a 'negative' emotion it is critical for you to intervene with kindness. Protect your child, take care of your child in an adult and effective way. Just as you might do with a hurt child, you might comfort yourself with some kind talk; you might remind yourself that you can deal with what has happened; you might practice some self-soothing; and/or do some breathing. You will need to remind yourself that you are imperfect, that you are damaged, that it is okay to get things wrong and remember how you got this way and remind yourself of the struggle that has gone into your becoming who you have become. The critical element of dealing with the emotion is kindness. You want to work the emotion until you can dissipate its effect but you have to be very careful that you do this without become defensive avoiding bullying yourself (or other), judging yourself (or other), criticising yourself (or other), minimising yourself (or other), or invalidating yourself (or other).

Self-criticism, unrealistic expectations, unrelenting standards and any kind of self-depreciation will undermine your ability to achieve mastery because it will make you increasingly unsafe and therefore unstable. It is equally the case, that catastrophizing, ruminating, generalising and having the odd tantrum are equally unhelpful if you want a happy and powerful life.

Sometimes it can take a long time to protect your child. Depending on the situation it can take days and even weeks to deal with a trauma and even then you might find that the trauma gets triggered by something else at a later stage. It is important,

however, whenever possible to reach a place of emotional stability before you deal with problems. With increasing mastery, what you will notice is how much quicker you can deal effectively with your emotions. It is not that you get hurt that matters, you will get hurt, life hurts, but what you want to watch is how quickly and effectively you deal with the hurt. When you have managed the emotion, the next step is to practice your PCP by working out how you are going to manage the situation, which involves going into forward thinking with planning and problem solving. If you manage the emotion first, you might well find that managing the situation itself becomes a lot easier.

IDENTIFY TRIGGERS.

When you identify a loss of equanimity, identify the trigger. Quickly identify triggers. Notice dissonance. This is fine tuning your relationship with yourself and your environment. Catch it early, catch it when it happens and not only is it easier to manage but you are dealing directly with the source of your disharmony rather than ending up submerged in a black hole of catastrophe and generalisation or detached and isolated from your experience of your life. Triggers can be people, places, situations or ideas. Notice dissonance, identify the trigger (if you can) and then use your mind to manage the emotion(s) with kindness. See, it's easy.

Identifying triggers is useful if you tend to get too detached from your emotions but it is also useful if you tend to get overwhelmed by your emotions. If you get too detached from your emotions it means that you usually push through triggers, denying their impact on you which helps you avoid what is upsetting you. By identifying the triggers you will become more sensitive to your experience of life and bit by bit you can start to experience being you again. If on the other hand, you tend to get overwhelmed by emotions, identifying the triggers can help you deal with the emotions as they arise rather than leaving it until you are so swamped by emotions that they are difficult to deal with.

IDENTIFY MICRO-PANICS.

Our nervous systems are incredibly sensitive, we react to even subtle changes in our environment. When our brains pick up the slightest threat; our anxiety levels rise. We can identify these experiences as micro-panics. Mostly we push through these feelings, they can be so mild that it is easy to ignore them and get on with whatever it is we are doing. This is well and good except that these emotions can motivate our behaviour from under the radar and they can also build up inside of us making us increasingly stressed, tense and detached from our experience of living. Conversely, if we get into the practice of catching these micro-panics as they arise and manage them effectively, we will get more efficient at managing our stress levels and we will become increasingly connected to how we are experiencing life. Identifying micro-panics is about micro-managing your emotions. You might well be surprised to

realise how very small triggers can have a significant emotional impact on you. It does not have to be an intense emotional experience, it can be almost undetectable but it can still have a powerful effect on your experience of life. For example, say someone says something sarcastic to me and everyone laughs, including me. I might push through the hurt and pretend, even to myself, that it doesn't matter. By pushing through the experience, I am denying the panic that it triggered that I am not likeable. The insult was mild and it was immediately managed but by pushing it away. I may have no notion why I am unsettled and even unhappy for the rest of the day, and possibly even depressed the next. If on the other hand, I notice the reaction and self soothe I can micro-manage the emotion on the spot and quite possibly my day will turn out differently. I might or might not choose to handle the situation differently. I might still choose to laugh it off because I don't want to confront the situation in the moment or I might be assertive enough to object to what has been said, but the way I manage the emotion inside of myself is what counts when we are managing our micro-panics.

In this week you want to identify your micro-panics and deal with them directly.

SELF-SOOTHE.

Self-soothing is the fundamental component of managing your moods. You do not wait until you are in a panic attack or end up in a black hole with your mood in your boots. Micro-manage your anxiety with self-soothing. This is especially the case when you notice a micro-panic or identify a trigger. This week do not plough through your emotions, unless you have to, notice the emotion, label it and then take a few seconds to self soothe. Notice even a subtle drop in mood. Use your mind to calm yourself down. Settle yourself as you might an anxious child. Kindly, firmly and gently look after yourself. Notice your distress and comfort yourself. The exact way that you do this will vary. You might find you need to remove pressure from yourself by walking away for a while; you might want to do some comfort talking as you might do a hurt child; you might want to build your self-confidence by reminding yourself of what you have achieved; you might want to get some perspective by remembering that nothing matters that much; you might try to generate hopefulness in you; you might like to pray; you might like to meditate; you might like to practice mindfulness by connecting with something beautiful or wonderful; you might breathe; you might decide to trust the process; you might try to accept the things you cannot change. Somewhere in there, you can find a way to self soothe. It may be difficult but work the emotion until you feel it shift. With mastery you can actually feel the feeling dissipate. Work it, work it hard, you are in charge!

Self-soothe first. Self-soothing is not about avoidance. In fact it is the opposite, it is about dealing with the emotion directly and when you do, you are likely to be more efficient at problem solving. When possible, self soothe before you react. If you want to live a powerful life, you need to respond to situations rationally rather than emotionally. If you self-soothe first when you confront dissonance then you are

much more likely to respond in a more effective and powerful way. If you get into the habit of self-soothing before you react or respond, you will become increasingly powerful.

If you are overwhelmed by your emotions, you might find it difficult to self-soothe. When everything is dark and nothing seems worthwhile, it is hard to extract yourself enough to be able to calm yourself down. It might seem like it's not going to go anywhere, that inevitably life will be horrible again and nothing will make any difference so why bother, but remember how much of your suffering is generated by your own mind, so give the best you have got and even if it is really hard, keep going, you are training your brain to do life differently and just possibly the next part of your life could be the best. Self-soothe, self-soothe, self-soothe.

REGULATE YOUR BREATHING.

Learn to regulate your breathing. Breathing techniques are huge in helping you manage your moods and are an integral part of self-soothing. There is some debate about what kind of breathing is best. For the most part it is recommended to take big slow breaths, deep into your abdomen and then followed with a long exhale. It may be useful just to breathe in through your nose, hold the breath for a few seconds and then breathe out through your mouth. Another technique is just to watch your breathing without trying to change the rhythm. I don't think it matters that much, just as long as you draw your attention to your breathing and regulate it.

USE CALMING STATEMENTS.

Another very useful way of self-soothing is to use a calming statement. Used in conjunction with regular breathing, calming statements are a way of telling your brain that you are not stuck on the railway tracks with a train coming. They can be used to remind your brain that it is okay and you can cope. Given, of course, that you are not stuck on the railway tracks with a train coming!

PRACTICE THE HALTS.

Effectively moderating your mood requires that you take care of yourself. The HALTS are a good reminder to keep balance in your life by avoiding getting too hungry, angry, lonely, tired or serious.

PROSPECT.

DO THE PCP

Central to MMM is forward thinking. Forward thinking is about problem solving, planning and directing.

Our PCP with regard to managing our emotions involves recognising if we have become defensive and observing our emotional reaction to that trigger, self-soothing and then deciding how we want to deal with what has happened with a focus on problem solving, planning and keeping an eye on who we are becoming as we go about doing what it is we have decided to do.

Our brains in automatism take us through a day reacting to circumstances in a prescribed way and therefore what the day ends up being about, and who you end up becoming in the process, is shaped by your automatic triggers to what happens. And so your future will be much the same as your past. Alternatively, using that transcendent self, you can stay aware of your options, carving something out of the day that is about where you want it to go.

We direct our thinking in a forward manner. This does not mean that we ignore what has happened or avoid understanding who we have become but that our focus is always on where we are going.

DO THE PCR

Your positive constructive relaxation is a huge part in managing your emotions. If you nurture yourself with healthy activities you will be less stressed, have more bounce in your steps and better able to handle the curve balls.

SUMMARY

1. Prepare your practice (online), remove or contain certain ARO's and select various power activities.
2. Use your mind to connect with your emotions.
3. Use your mind to manage your emotions.
4. Do the PCP and PCR
5. Report back in the evening.