

MIND MANAGEMENT MASTERY

CERTIFICATION COURSE

INTRODUCTION TO MIND MANAGEMENT MASTERY

Focus: Change your mind.

Introduction

Your mind's job is to code all the information from your environment in order to help you undertake the journey of your life as safely as possible. For the most part, this is done automatically. As counter intuitive as it sounds, the decisions we make are usually not decisions we make! What this means is that the way you are doing your life is predicated by the past because your past ways of doing things has set the pathways of your mind and therefore your life is likely to see you repeating the same old patterns over and over again. So, if you want a different future you will need to take charge of your mind. Mind Management Mastery is about over-riding the brain's automatic pilot. This process demands awareness, analysis and direction. We need to be aware of what our brain is doing, we need to decide if that's what we want it to be doing and, if not, then we need to tell it where to go.

This module is an introduction to certain concepts we will be using during the course. Firstly there are the fundamentals and then there are the three MMM practices.

THE FUNDAMENTALS

BE MINDFUL

Awareness is our key to rising above our automated, defensive self. We have to become aware of what our mind is doing before we have any chance of directing it. Awareness is a very strange ability, a complex function that has generated enormous deliberations and discussions. I see me. Who is the I who see me? Is the "I" who sees me part of who I am? Does the I who sees me have free will or is it another

computer superimposed on the brain's computer? Whatever the answer to these questions, if you are to master your mind and direct your life, you will need to develop your transcendent self. Awareness is something we have to deliberately cultivate. We have to step out of our 'selves' in order to see our 'selves' in perspective. For the most part, life sucks us in and we get swallowed up in a whole series of reactions which then shape who we became and what we did with our lives. If we want more than that, we need to develop our transcendent selves.

Central to mind management mastery is our ability to achieve perspective. In all of your MMM modules, our focus will be on developing your mind's eye, your third eye, your transcendent self, your spiritual self or the part of you that can see you. However you define this aspect of who you are, it is the part of you that can keep perspective and be engaged at the same time. Cultivating your transcendent self allows you to have a mindful connection with the experience of your life. At the end of every day, we want to see you with an increased ability to be mindful of yourself, mindful of what you think, what you feel and how you react. So much of our psychological suffering is related to losing perspective. During this week, be the object of your own scientific experiment. Watch yourself as you go about your day, notice what you are feeling, see yourself interact with your environment, engage absolutely from a disinterested place.

BE SELF-CENTRED

MMM is about developing an internal locus of control. It is not so much about what happens to you but about what you do about it. The focus of your deliberations during the week is on how you react to the events of the week. Very often we centre our happiness on an external locus of control. Wishing, waiting, wanting are constructs related to an external locus of control. Wishing is about hoping that something will happen. Waiting is about hoping that our circumstances will change somehow. Wanting is about yearning for things to change including wanting to be understood.

Clearly our real power is over how we react or respond to what happens. It is what we do with what happens that makes every difference in our personal power to direct our lives and achieve happiness. It is possible, that if there is any meaning to your life, then it is related to how you have responded to the events of your life. In all my own deliberations, it is what I have come to believe. If anything means anything then the reason for your life and mine is related to how we deal with what is given to us. The only thing that matters is how we respond to the every moment of our every day. Each response, is an expression of who you have become and expressing you is probably what your life is about.

Given this premise, becoming self-centred is an essential part of our ability to live a powerful and happy life. During this week turn your focus on yourself, increasing your awareness of how you are reacting to what is happening, how you are looking

after yourself, how you are speaking to yourself, how you defend yourself and, most importantly, how you express yourself.

BE KIND TO YOURSELF

Don't gloss over this part of your practice. You cannot bully yourself into mental health. When we get inspired, we can get highly motivated to change what we want to change or achieve what we want to achieve, which is great but then what often happens is that we readily slip into bullying ourselves with a list of instructions and expectations. It doesn't work. Kindness is the key. Self-criticism, unrealistic expectations, unrelenting standards and any kind of self-depreciation will undermine your ability to achieve mastery. Taking responsibility for your actions is well and good but do so from a position of patience, in the full realisation of your inevitable imperfection. So watch how you talk to yourself about yourself. Catch unrealistic expectations, unkind language, pressure to perform and when you stuff it up, don't forget to smile at yourself as you do what you can to fix it up.

THE THREE MMM PRACTICES

Over the week you will be introduced to three MMM practices that will be used to practice mind management. These are:

Anxiety Relieving Objects (ARO's)

Positive Constructive Prospecting (PCP)

Positive Constructive Relaxation (PCR)

ANXIETY RELIEVING OBJECTS

Everything you think, do and say is motivated by something. We don't think, do or say anything without some kind of motivation. When our brains are running the show, the primary motivation is to defend ourselves and therefore most of what we think, do and say is defensive. In order to over-ride our brains automated responses, therefore, we need to be able to detect when we are being defensive. A way of doing this is to identify and manage anxiety relieving objects (ARO's).

An ARO is an object of our attention that helps us manage our anxiety. ARO's include attachments to alcohol, tobacco, other drugs, gambling, computer games, comfort eating, day dreaming, obsessing about something, yearning for something, mindless chatter, nonsense television shows, intellectualising and any other bad habits such as counting, checking, ruminating etc. Because they come in so many

disguises it is worthwhile understanding their characteristics so that we can identify them quickly.

- An ARO is an empty calorie. It has no, or very little, nutritional value. It does not nourish you physically, intellectually or emotionally. So one way of detecting an ARO fairly easily, is to ask if what you are thinking, doing or saying is nourishing you in some way. Is whatever you are thinking, feeling or doing, good for you? The nutritional value of food, for example, is one thing, but comfort eating is another. The social advantages of drinking alcohol are one thing, drinking to get drunk is another. The security value of checking the doors is one thing, checking them a thousand times is another. The value of problem solving is one thing, endlessly going over the same thing with little chance of being able to do anything about is another. Insight into your stuff-ups is one thing, beating yourself up, is another. Being sensitive to your effect on others is one thing, endlessly worrying about what others think of you is another. Wanting to belong is one thing, selling yourself in order to fit in is another.
- An ARO is a negative reinforcer. Everything we think, do or say is motivated by something. So the question arises as to what motivates thoughts, actions and words that have no value in our lives? Why do we use our own brains to avoid life, or even worse, to generate our own unhappiness? A negative reinforcer is something that is reinforcing because it results in an offset of pain (or discomfort), it does make us feel better but the way it works is that it helps us avoid or alleviate something worse. Avoidance, distractions, fantasies, mindless activities are good examples of how ARO's reduce the discomfort of reality. Worrying and ruminating and self pity are a little harder to understand because they feel like they make life worse rather than better but remember we are choosing to worry, ruminate or indulge in self-pity. Something is motivating us to generate our own distress. Worrying, however, allows us to believe that maybe we will be able to stop something from happening or it allows us to believe that we can be prepared for something bad happening. Ruminating allows us the false belief that thinking about it once more might produce a different result. Self pity removes our anxiety that it is our fault and/or creates the suggestion that someone will account for life being unfair. Whatever the case, ARO's have the effect of reducing or relieving some kind of discomfort.
- An ARO is a filler. It is something you use to fill the emotional empty spaces caused by rising anxiety. Comfort eating is an obvious example but we can do the same thing with many other things. Consider how fantasy fills an empty space. It can be completely improbable that you will ever achieve what's going on in that head of yours, so why bother with it? It makes you feel good and it does so because it helps avoid the discomfort of now. There are a whole heap of beliefs that are fillers. These are ideas that we get hold of because they help us feel better even if they have very little basis in reality. Gossiping, talking

about nothing, watching boring television and computer games are other examples of things we do to distract ourselves from the discomfort of being in the moment. Keeping ourselves very busy doing stuff that doesn't need to be done is also an ARO. Being busy is a good way of avoiding something.

When you are happy, challenged, excited, motivated, inspired and/or involved, then you don't use ARO's. When you are absorbed in what you are doing and are powerfully engaged in living your life, time flies and there is a certain exhilaration in the moment and then we have no need or interest in ARO's. We use ARO's when something has triggered our anxiety and we have become defensive. With mind management mastery, we want to identify and contain your defensive self so that we can increasingly liberate your real self to live your life in as full a way as possible. By recognising ARO's, you can quickly become aware that you have become defensive, something has triggered an anxiety response in you and you have reached for an ARO.

Please note: if you are physically dependent on alcohol or another substance and want to stop using this substance during the module you may need to consult your GP. It is also the case that limiting your use of ARO's to cope with life might become very difficult for you. When you remove your ARO'S, it is likely you will experience an increase in boredom, restlessness, agitation and anxiety. This is good because an increase in distress is the material for your mind management. You want to deal effectively with life rather than use distractions to hide away from it. During this week remove your ARO's as much as you can, experience the distress, manage it effectively and then direct your brain to engage in constructive prospecting. HOWEVER, and this is important, avoid unrealistic expectations and remember to be kind to yourself. It is better to use an ARO than it is to bully yourself. If it gets too hard, reach for a distractor. We do not want mind management to be another thing you use to whip yourself.

IS MY THINKING HELPFUL?

A relatively easy way of detecting an ARO is to question whether or not what you are thinking, feeling or doing is productive. You can easily question whether or not what you are thinking, feeling and/or doing is helpful. Is what you are thinking, doing or feeling helping you become who you want to becoming and do what you want to do with your life? It doesn't even matter if you don't know who you want to become or what you want to do with your life, it can be instantly clear that this is not it! So a very quick way of catching an ARO is to ask whether your thoughts, feelings, and/or behaviours are useful. If what you are thinking, feeling or doing is not helpful, then it is likely to be an ARO.

In this introductory part of the course, the practice will be to catch yourself thinking and then question whether or not your thinking is helpful or not. This is a very simple practice that can make the world of difference. How much of our thinking is swallowed up in stuff that not only fails to help us live happy and powerful lives but

actually makes our lives worse? Questioning whether your thinking is helping you is a powerful way of drawing your attention to how you are responding to the events of your life and increasing your awareness of other options if you find that you are in a space that is not helpful.

Catching yourself is the difficult part. It is easy to question whether a thought, feeling or behaviour is helpful but, because most of a cognitive processes are automatic, it can be hard to catch yourself engaged in that which is not helpful to you. It is for this reason, that awareness is such a critical part of mind management mastery.

If you find that your thinking is not helpful, then the next step is to consider what is motivating the stuff that is going on in your head. By and large, unhelpful thinking comes from your defensive self. When we are happy, involved, challenged or absorbed in something, we do not engage this type of thinking. It pops up when something has triggered us and we have become threatened in some way, making us want to defend ourselves (and/or our loved ones) from getting hurt. The triggers can be external, a situation or person can trigger us but it can also be an internal trigger such as self-doubt, self-depreciation, or a memory of something bad that happened.

When you detect that you have become defensive honour the emotion. Something has frightened you. It is real. You are feeling threatened. That's not bad, or stupid, or silly, or indulgent. We want to moderate how you respond to the threat but you cannot bully yourself into mental health. So acknowledge that you have become threatened and be kind to yourself, with the same kindness that you might use if a child was feeling equally threatened.

WHAT AM I DEFENDING?

In order to get to know your defensive self better, it is useful to question what it is you are defending.

Let's consider the triggers:

- Challenging your world view.
- Being criticised.
- Being shamed.
- Fear of being vulnerable.
- Fear of something bad happening.
- Pressure to perform.
- Fear of losing control.
- Fear of failure.
- Fear of success.

Simply being able to identify the trigger can make an enormous difference. We can become reactive without even realising that we have become defensive. By

identifying that something has triggered in you some kind of anxiety or fear, you enter into a different state of consciousness. Instead of being in automatic, you have altered your state of consciousness to one of awareness and validation.

HOW DO I WANT TO RESPOND TO THE THREAT?

The question, how do I want to respond to the threat is enormously powerful. Invoking the question over-rides the automatism and allows us the opportunity of responding rationally. In our case, we want to do the PCP.

POSITIVE CONSTRUCTIVE PROSPECTING

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

We look forward when we focus on solving problems. What we are going to do about a problem is more helpful than endlessly going over and over what happened. We do need to be clear about what happened and to have identified the issues involved, particularly own motivation but we need to move on relatively quickly to consider what we want to do about the situation. Writing down issues is very useful. Your brain has the ability to go over the same thing ad infinitum but you can't write it over and over again. So if you find yourself stuck in recycling an event, write it down and then focus on what you want to do about it. If we identify that we have become defensive then our attention moves to problem solving. It bodes well to always remember that we have become defensive because something has threatened us and therefore the first part of problem solving has to do with dealing with the frightened child. Comfort, reassure, breathe, talk yourself down, get some space or do whatever you would do to soothe a frightened child.

Focussing our attention on who we are becoming is another aspect of forward thinking. At the end of each day, one of the most important aspects of the day is about whether or not you like yourself better. Regardless of what happened, it bodes well to remember that what you are left with as you go through your life is you, and if you want to like who you are, if you want to be proud of yourself (and what is more important than that?), you need to focus your attention on who you are being as you deal with what is happening. Becoming who you want to become is such an incredibly powerful part of mind management. Mind management affords you the opportunity to shape who you become. This is often a little understood part of our minds in automatism. It feels as if who we are exists independently of who we are being. You do have a particular personality and you are probably stuck with that but that is only a small part of who you have become and it is incredibly powerful to realise that everything you think, do and say shapes who you are becoming. It is amazingly powerful to start to shape who you want to become by using that transcendent self to keep an eye on who you are being as you go about your business.

As I do what I am doing, who am I becoming? This question immediately drags my attention into the future. Focussing our attention on who you are becoming in the process of doing your day, also involves forward thinking.

Planning is another function that involves forward thinking and is very powerful. What do I want my day to be about? This question takes us into the future with regard to the choices we make about where we want to put our attention and what we want to do with our time. 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 is shaped by what happened which triggered an automatic response in you. With that transcendent self you can stay aware of your option, 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.

Positive Constructive Prospecting is the functional unit of a healthy mind. It is what healthy minds do. Using your mind to solve problems and make plans under the umbrella of who you are becoming, is the healthiest way you can make use of your mind. It is also the most powerful use of your mind.

Mind management mastery helps you identify unhelpful thinking but you also want to enable constructive thinking. To stop dysfunctional thinking is great but then where are you going to put your mind? If you interrupt any kind of unhelpful thinking such as ruminating, catastrophizing, obsessing, resenting, justifying, daydreaming, plotting, counting, checking etc., then where do you take your mind? You do the PCP of course!

Prospecting is the first step in a process of exploration. If you are prospecting for gold you set off on journey looking for gold. If you are prospecting for sales, you consider how to generate sales. With mind management mastery you are prospecting for life. You are looking forward, creatively into your future in a way that is positive and constructive.

We use prospecting in MMM because of its emphasis on starting a journey towards something rather than on being focussed on the end result. This is a critical difference. Very often we are motivated by what we want to achieve, so we attach to some future goal and drive ourselves through life to get there. This creates pressure to perform, unrealistic expectations and has a focus on the outcome rather than the process. Prospecting, on the other hand, is about engaging in the journey in a positive and constructive way. Whatever is happening in your life, good or bad, take your brain into the near future in a positive and constructive way. Whatever is happening, your focus has to be on what you are going to do with what is happening so that it will take you to a better place. The questions you ask yourself have to be aimed at where you are going with what is happening, what you want to do about it,

how you want your day to unfold, and who you want to become. This focus is not about what is happening but in how you want to deal with whatever is happening. You are creatively engaged in problem solving, enhancing opportunities and forging the road ahead of you.

You are unfolding the story of you. For the most part, your story unfolds behind you. Something happens and you react to whatever it was and then how you reacted shapes what happens next and so your life unfolds. Your mind management allows you the opportunity of getting ahead of the process so that you direct the show. Instead of just reacting to triggers, you engage in what is happening creatively, using whatever has happened, to take you somewhere that enables you to live a powerful and happy life. It is what you do about what is happening that ends up shaping who you become and often also leads to what happens next. At the end of the day, will you be proud of yourself, will you like yourself better for how you managed the day, will you have expanded your perceptions or abilities, will you have expressed who you are and, will you have achieved something useful?

Just imagine the effects of using your thinking in this way. How much of your thinking has been swallowed up with resentments, justification, fantasy, daydreaming, worrying, ruminating, judging and plotting? If you could just increase your PCP by ten percent in a day, if you could drag your thinking out of the mire and put it somewhere that leads to your doing something constructive in your day, then without a doubt, you will have substantially increased the productivity and the quality of your life that comes with improved positivity and improved productivity. Today, go the whole hog and take 20% of your unhelpful thinking out of your cognitive processing and then fill that space with constructive prospecting or productive relaxation.

PRACTICE CONSTRUCTIVE RELAXATION.

MMM for mind management involves removing the distractions you use. If you take out your distractions, however, you might be left not knowing what to do with your free time. It is very interesting to experience the restlessness that comes with boredom, how easily we can become agitated wanting to fill the void with something because we are not using our usual distractions. Practicing constructive relaxation is about filling that void with something that is nourishing rather than avoidant. ARO'S are empty calories. They are behaviours that have no 'nutritional' value. They do not nourish us or help us move forward in our lives, they are "fillers" that help us avoid experiencing the restlessness and agitation of boredom.

So read a non-fiction book, or a good fiction novel rather than trite fiction, watch a nature show rather than a soapie, go for a walk rather than play a computer game, phone a friend rather than ran a fantasy, eat a piece of fruit rather than a crisp (or two). Write your story rather than ruminate over it. Do something creative or learn something. Skip or dance. Do something fun that is good for you. Just for this week, practice using your mind to practice constructive relaxation.

So this brings us to the end of the introduction to MMM. For some, this may not be new stuff, perhaps just packaged differently, for others, this may be new and therefore possibly a bit daunting. These concepts will come up over and over again, so be okay with whatever makes sense to you, take what you want, leave the rest. From my perspective, the MMM journey is one that will take you the rest of your life. To emerge from behind your defences means you have to have to first identify who you really are and then you have to have the courage to express yourself which involves be willing to be open, honest and vulnerable. This is a journey of a lifetime.

SUMMARY

1. Prepare your practice (online), remove or contain certain ARO's and select various power activities.
2. Use your mind to practice the MMM Fundamentals: Being Mindful, Being Self Centred, Being Kind.
3. Use your mind to engage the three MMM practices: Removing ARO's, do the PCP and the PCR.
4. Report back in the evening.