

LANCASTER UNIVERSITY

**'Honouring Individuality, Creating Community: Mindfulness-Based
Emotional Development and Wellbeing'**

by

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A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

IN FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE

DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICS, PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION

LANCASTER, UK

December 2012

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled 'Honouring Individuality, Creating Community: Mindfulness-Based Emotional Development and Wellbeing' submitted by Janet Goss for the DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

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Acknowledgments

I wish to thank Professor Chris Partridge for his enthusiasm and support, for guiding me through the process and sharing with me his extensive knowledge and understanding of 'alternative' spiritualities. Also, for allowing me the freedom to change departments mid-course and come back to the Religious Studies department when I needed his support to make sense of the writing process. In addition, I would like to thank Professor Susan Cartwright of the Centre for Organisational Health and Wellbeing, for the two years I spent in the Division of Health Research, for her guidance when I was conducting the empirical research and for encouraging me to step outside of my comfort zone. Thanks also to Professor Chris Hatton and Professor Cary Cooper for their guidance and Dr Alison Collins for her patience in helping me with my quantitative data. I am also indebted to Dr. Sally Watson of the Centre for Personal Development, in Lancaster University Management School, and Magnus George from the Institute for Enterprise and Entrepreneurship, who have both supported the practice of my work. Thanks are also due to the thirty-six participants who took part in the study, for their commitment to completing all of the measures asked of them and for their enthusiasm to learn and apply mindfulness skills in their lives, for their authenticity and invaluable contributions to this research. I am deeply indebted to my wonderful family and friends, new and old, who have supported me in countless ways, especially for their patience and understanding when I have been tired and unavailable. Also thanks need to be expressed to all of the mindfulness teachers and practitioners that have enabled my journey, I am deeply appreciative for all of the wisdom and knowledge that has been selflessly shared for the benefit of humanity. Lastly and

most importantly, a heartfelt thank you goes to my son Charlie, my constant (albeit distant) companion, teacher, guide and inspiration. From the beginning you have shown me the way.

Abstract

With reference to the turn to the self in contemporary Western societies, this study assesses the significance of emotional competence as a means of improving subjective wellbeing. It delineates the key components of the subjective turn and specifies the main outcome as emotional competence, achieved through increased self-reflection and self-awareness. The efficacy of mindfulness practice as a method for improving emotional competence is examined and a programme of mindfulness-based emotional development (MBED) devised, informed by a substantial body of empirical research. Prior to working with thirty-five participants in six discrete groups from a range of work-related contexts, extensive participant observation was undertaken through attendance in a broad range of mindfulness retreats, training, courses and conferences. The resultant one-day course was used to assess the outcomes of participation for the co-researchers. The therapeutic effects are reported quantitatively in terms of psychological wellbeing, physical health and productivity at work, and qualitatively using data from the co-researcher 'diary' accounts. In addition, an autoethnographical account of the researcher's longitudinal experience is elucidated as a method of assessing the significance of the practice for emotional management using a three-fold typology of the sacred, the mundane and the profane. The thesis culminates in a four-phase model of personal development that examines the application of MBED as a means of facilitating eudaemonic wellbeing, through improved intrapersonal and interpersonal communication.

Introduction

This longitudinal, post-positivist study is primarily qualitative in orientation. It adheres to social constructionist epistemology and utilises appropriate methodologies to document the utility and application of mindfulness practice. In accordance with constructionist principles it also incorporates a quantitative element, which generates data that is a useful measure of the efficacy of certain aspects of the empirical research that was undertaken. This combination of methods ensures a rigorous account of the research phenomena, through a process of triangulation.

The study builds upon existing research into the efficacy and application of mindfulness, and contributes to this primarily with data generated through subjective accounts, thus adding richness to the pre-existing data. To date, the plethora of research on the *application* of mindfulness practice has focused primarily on its utility in clinical contexts and in relation to specific forms of pathology. The thesis seeks to redress the balance by providing an account of the application within a non-clinical context, not solely as a 'preventative' measure, but more specifically as a means of contributing to wellbeing. It addresses the question of *how* mindfulness practice contributes to eudaemonic wellbeing, in particular.

In response, it formulates a theory within the context of the well-documented 'turn to the self' and explicates mindfulness as an effective form of emotional development. It delineates the significance of emotional development and how this contributes to intrapersonal and interpersonal communication, and it explicates the impact of effective communication on eudaemonic wellbeing. The first three chapters provide contextual evidence through a review of the

relevant literature and Chapters 4 and 5 delineate the extensive empirical research that was conducted over a three-year period, with conclusions being drawn in the final chapter.

Specifically, Chapter 1 provides an account of the turn to the self with reference to the migration from institutionalised religion to non-denominational forms of 'spirituality' and a belief in life-itself as sacred, which is in evidence throughout the holistic milieu. As part of this investigation the chapter explores the historical events that have led to contemporary subjective wellbeing culture and it establishes the dominant principles of the milieu, which provide the foundation for the subsequent theoretical and empirical research. It elucidates understanding of the self as a 'reflexive project' and the influence of psychotherapy in the disclosure of the 'authentic self', as pivotal to that process. Significantly, it establishes the correlation of psychological and spiritual references that result in the 'psychospiritual' paradigm, and the importance of emotional awareness and the transformative capability of the psychospiritual emotions in particular, in relation to subjective wellbeing.

Chapter 2 provides a rigorous interrogation of the therapeutic and emotional aspects of the turn to the self. Through an analysis of Frank Furedi's arguments about 'therapy culture' and particularly his critique of an underlying 'culture of emotionalism,' the significance of emotional development is discussed. Furedi's argument that therapy culture has resulted in connotations and negative feelings of vulnerability is critiqued in an analysis of the prominence and significance of emotion as part of the human condition. By understanding the centrality of emotion to lived experience and the influence of the therapeutic, it demonstrates that the psychospiritual paradigm has initiated

an emotional discourse, which provides a non-religious language with which to interpret the human condition. Furedi's thesis that psychological discourse has fostered fear and vulnerability is used to expose his own biases and to build an argument for the value of the therapeutic and emotional development in particular. The correspondence between therapy culture, the expressivist and humanistic principles, particularly the quest for authenticity, and the turn to the self is discussed, with reference to the development of 'emotional intelligence'.

Chapter 3 provides a thorough deconstruction of the term 'mindfulness' to enable understanding of the phenomenon in relation to self-awareness and self-reflection. Commonality and difference is discussed to discriminate the terms and understand how they can work together to form an effective form of personal development. Further explication is sought through an account of the psychological and Buddhist perspectives and the application within a psychotherapy context. Practice, both formal and informal, is scrutinised to delineate its fundamental elements and how they constitute an efficacious practice. Through an interrogation of the historical context within which contemporary 'secularised' mindfulness practice has developed, its efficacy and significance as a form of emotional development is delineated. The suitability of the method as a defining practice of subjective wellbeing culture is verified due to its psychological, spiritual, somatic, and emotional components in particular. Empirical research is reviewed to determine the efficacy of mindfulness, and draws upon a range of literature from psychology to neuroscience. The nature of eudaemonic wellbeing is determined and its significance in relation to personal development that is primarily emotional in orientation is established, and how this combines with mindfulness practice to inform intrapersonal communication.

Chapter 4 is an introduction to the empirical research undertaken and provides an explication and justification of the combined qualitative and quantitative methodology employed during the initial phase. It provides a detailed account of the research design, from the formulation and facilitation of the one-day mindfulness-based self-awareness (MBSA) course to the outcomes reported in the self-reflective journal accounts of the thirty-five participants. The course content, which encompasses the principles of the subjective turn with a particular emphasis on mindfulness practice, is critically appraised as this forms the basis of the research. Throughout, participant accounts are used to initiate enquiry and substantiate the design decisions. Qualitative evidence of the subjective outcomes experienced by the participants in the five weeks following the one-day workshop, is elucidated. Quantitative evidence is also provided in response to the completion of the ASSET questionnaire, which was completed by the participants three times over a three-month period, to determine changes in psychological wellbeing, physical health and productivity at work. The explication of the empirical research contributes understanding of mindfulness practice and its utility in non-clinical populations and for the specific purpose of improving wellbeing. The accounts provide a breadth of data that delineates commonality and difference in terms of research outcomes. It also emphasises the emotional account and the importance of the research relationship and how this may influence outcomes.

Chapter 5 builds upon the empirical research detailed in Chapter 4. It provides further information regarding the significance of the emotionalist account and the value of reflexivity and the autoethnographic contribution in particular. It details issues raised in the course design and how these were

addressed to ensure a rigorous research process. In addition, a great deal of preparatory work was undertaken by the researcher prior to the design and facilitation of the one-day course, in the form of mindfulness training. Many retreats and courses were attended, and these experiences are used to add depth to the accounts provided by the co-researchers. The subjective experience gained from having engaged in a regular mindfulness practice for the duration of the research period is utilised to delineate the phenomenon, practice and outcomes. From the empirical research a three-fold typology of mindfulness practice and emotional development has been formulated as a methodology for gaining understanding of the practice. It utilises a framework of the sacred, the mundane and the profane to unpack the emotional significance and the outcomes of practice. The researcher's subjective accounts, which are taken from self-reflective journals, are utilised to illustrate the application of mindfulness practice within lived experience. This is done in relation to the three categories specified, in order to contribute a deeper understanding of the practice. The three categories of 'sacred', 'mundane' and 'profane', as discussed in recent cultural sociology, are elucidated to provide an understanding of the conditions that contribute to practice.

Chapter 6, the final chapter, builds upon the empirical research to provide an application for the outcomes of the research. It explicates personal development as a process that encompasses both intrapersonal and interpersonal communication training and utilises mindfulness, self-awareness and self-reflection, for the purpose of improving emotional competence. The application of mindfulness as a form of effective communication is proposed utilising five interrelated modes of self-awareness: somatic; cognitive;

emotional; behavioural; and linguistic. The significance of applying these to improve intuitive perception, and the relation this has to the milieu through quantum theory is also explicated. The social nature of being human is delineated and correlated to effective communication, and the social imperative is stressed as a function of subjective wellbeing. The necessity for authenticity as a prerequisite for effective communication and therefore wellbeing is also emphasised, thus demonstrating the unifying principles of subjective wellbeing culture. The legacy of 'therapy culture' is explicated as the provision of a common language through which to make sense of the human condition. It offers justification of the therapeutic process as a means of nurturing sacred emotional energy, which directly affects self and by a process of 'osmosis', other. Through this understanding of the therapeutic/healing process the myth of the subjective turn as essentially narcissistic is allayed. The application of mindfulness as a method of improving communication within a 'mundane' context is proposed, not only as a means of improving subjective wellbeing but also as a means of creating 'community', particularly within a work context. The four-phase model of personal development constitutes the application of the knowledge gained from the empirical research. Finally, recommendations are made for further research and applications of the theoretical knowledge, in the context of personal development.

Chapter 1: The Subjective Turn and the Psychospiritual Paradigm

1.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to establish the defining features of the turn to the self and subjective wellbeing culture through a thorough and broad investigation of the milieu as a whole. The turn to the self is complex, and it has therefore been necessary to draw together many threads in order to provide a comprehensive and complete picture that establishes the principles that underpin the empirical research that follows.

This chapter therefore provides an investigation of the authority of the individual in modernity and the turn to the self, and establishes how this has resulted in a migration from institutionalised forms of religion to more individualistic forms of spirituality. The nature of 'spirituality' is established through an elucidation of its commonality with, and difference from 'religion', in order to show the broad field of practice that the term 'spiritual' typically encompasses. The historical roots of this 'subjectivisation' are also investigated to demonstrate the influence of the Romantics, and to ascertain the particularly dramatic shift that took hold during the counter-culture of the 1960s.

In addition, the nature of the holistic milieu is demonstrated to establish the influence that the turn to the self has had in shaping a subjective wellbeing culture, which encompasses what may be broadly defined as 'spiritual' and 'therapeutic' practices. The resultant 'psycho-spiritual' paradigm is interrogated to gain further theoretical understanding that is later used to shape the empirical research design, and the workshop agenda in particular. The primary principles that emerge from this investigation are those of self-awareness, authenticity and expressivity. These are pivotal to the psycho-spiritual paradigm and its emphasis

on 'wholeness', 'healing', and 'self-actualisation', all of which contribute to subjective wellbeing.

1.2 Distinguishing Spirituality from Religion.

The term 'religion' has become synonymous with forms of 'institutionalised' religion such as the church, whereas spirituality more commonly refers to an inner, subjective experience, sometimes within a traditional, religious framework, but increasingly outside of one. A contrast is often made between the patriarchal and hierarchical nature of institutionalised forms of religious practice, and the individualistic qualities of spirituality (Vincett and Woodhead, 2009, 329). Naturally, the two can work in harmony within an institutionalised religious setting if equal importance is given to the symbols of religion and the personal experience of the spiritual. However, it is not uncommon for the authority of the institution to be given priority. Indeed, the original use of the term 'spirituality' referred to mystical elements within institutional religion and the two terms were often used interchangeably. It was in the mid-nineteenth century that a clear difference began to surface between religion and spirituality. Spirituality became synonymous with an 'alternative', 'preferable' and 'superior' form of religiosity, the hallmarks of which were as follows: the affirmation of an inner experience of the ineffable; the authority of individual experience; an emphasis on the search for personal truth; the value of personal development and insight gained through practice; an inclusive and empathic understanding of religion; and the development of holistic principles (ibid., 320). This delineation is helpful in providing an initial understanding of spirituality in the current context. However, more detail is required.

1.2.1 Defining Spirituality

A 'trichotomy' of approaches to spirituality, which are categorised as 'transcendent', 'value guidance', and 'structural-behaviourist' is defined within the literature on nursing practices (Coyle, 2002, 592). Value guidance is a term that is particularly salient here, it is defined as 'intrapersonal', and concerning 'the contemplation of one's inner self and resources', of being guided by subjective values (ibid., 593). Significantly in terms of this thesis, psychotherapies that have the potential to contribute to the process of self-understanding are also acknowledged here. Also within the nursing literature, a theory of horizontal and vertical spiritual dimensions is delineated. The vertical dimension symbolises the transcendent function, and the horizontal refers to 'one's beliefs, values, life-style, quality of life, and interactions with self, others, and nature' (Stoll, 1989, 6-7). The specification of non-theistic aspects of spirituality clearly denotes the existential dimension of self and lived experience as pivotal. However, an undefined 'creative source', labelled or otherwise, is nonetheless nominated as the essence of spirituality for many people (Culliford, 2011, 50). 'God' is not requisite, but is certainly not 'dead' either, being commonly understood as an energetic force that is essentially panentheistic. The individual is at liberty to 'mix and match', to label and define the significant 'sacred' aspects of their particular life at will. The 'terms and conditions' are flexible, accommodating, and inclusive, not rigid or dogmatic.

A useful definition of spirituality is provided by Culliford, that comprises a comprehensive list of 'spiritual themes' including: mysticism; God and the names of God; non-dualism; sacred universality; joy and wonder; life as a journey; love;

faith; wisdom; *emotions – healing and growth*; human stories; meaning and purpose; and death (ibid., 36, my emphasis). This list represents a spectrum that ranges from the ‘therapeutic’ to the ‘divine’, and as such it demonstrates the diversity of themes that the term encompasses, and although reference is made to a creative source, theistic themes are clearly in the minority. In addition to the spiritual themes, ‘spiritual values’ are also delineated, and these include: honesty; trust; compassion; generosity; patience; humility; beauty; and hope (ibid., 114). To these it would be appropriate to add authenticity, integrity, responsibility, altruism and mindfulness. The spiritual values are explicitly prioritised and valued in preference to material ones, although the material is not denigrated. The values and themes are in alignment and there is an accent on personal development and the ‘therapeutic’, which incorporates physical and psychological ‘healing’, and the quest for meaning and purpose in one’s life. There is a moral and ethical imperative, which serves as a value guidance system for living a respectful life in consideration of self, other, and the environment. In many respects the ‘spiritual’ lived experience accords with the ‘institutionalised religious’, but there are certain defining characteristics or emphases that vary, and so it is helpful to delineate these in order to maximise understanding.

1.2.2 Commonality and Difference

In *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, William James’ elucidated the ‘primordial’ nature of inner, ‘personal religion’ as a ‘direct personal communion with the divine’ (quoted in Tacey, 2004, 138). Indeed, this is key, because from this, the religious institution can be understood as being of secondary importance to personal experience of the divine. Obviously, as Tacey argues, an

inner, spiritual experience can subsequently lead to a thirst for religion within an institutional context. The two are not exclusive, they can work together and religion can also serve as the catalyst for spiritual insight (ibid., 103). However, there are some fundamental differences between the two, and although Tacey's elucidation does in part constitute a caricature of both, there are some significant, fundamental differences that are acknowledged. The inner, spiritual experience is more meaningful precisely because it is 'subjective', open to a diversity of philosophical views, and it is not steeped in a rigid adherence to dogma (ibid., 77). Religion by contrast, is described as patriarchal and hierarchical, with a focus on the institution as the predominant authority (ibid., 36-38). Naturally, there are systems that do adhere to the stereotype, and those that do not. Increasingly, adaptations are being made to traditional forms of religion in order to recruit participants, thus demonstrating the imperative to 'move with the times'. An example of this is the 'Order of Interbeing' (OI) led by the Vietnamese monk Thich Nhat Hanh, who teaches a form of 'engaged Buddhism' that emphasises the application of mindfulness. The teachings draw from Theravada and Mahayana Buddhist doctrine, and his Zen lineage (Bower, 2012b). They incorporate pragmatic philosophies and a forbearing approach to practice, and result in instruction that is highly pertinent to twenty-first century life.

Further insight into the common and differing aspects of spirituality and religion in a religious context, is available from a questionnaire study of 565 non-heterosexual Christians (Yip, 2003). Five homogeneous statements are extrapolated that define spirituality: exploring the inner self; meditating; searching for the meaning of life; praying privately at home; and upholding

humanistic values. Religion, on the other hand, is identified as: participating in rituals at church; subscribing to religious doctrines; sharing in worship at church; studying the Bible at home; and respecting nature. These categorisations to some extent contrast the inner 'self' nature of spirituality with the outer 'collective' nature of religion. In this example, the engagement with 'a' religious doctrine that can be practised individually or collectively, along with the terminology used, signifies that these statements refer to a religious context, but equally, the notion of practising collectively could within a different context, be a reference to spiritual, 'non-religious' practice. The references to nature and humanistic values could also be equally applied to a non-denominational spiritual practice. These categorisations demonstrate the spiritual 'essence' of religious practice, and illustrate that the boundaries are indistinct. In the study cited, respondents elucidated that optimally their practice encompasses individual and collective aspects of worship, and this too reiterates the point made above, that commonality exists. In essence, the salient features to emerge from the study were the communal nature of participating in religious practice compared to the 'self-based internal journey with the divine' that defines spirituality (ibid., 139).

Spirituality is also interpreted as a '*search*' or '*quest*' that is indicative of the 'inner life, and the individualistic search for meaning' (Flory and Miller, 2007, 214, original emphasis). The emphasis is on the 'subjective' search, which differentiates spirituality in a 'religiously unaffiliated "spiritual but not religious" approach' from that in an '*embodied*' context (ibid., 214-5, original emphasis). The term 'embodied' spirituality, is utilised in this context to define a spiritual experience that takes place within the 'body' of a religious institution (ibid., 215).

In the institutional context an experience only has significance for the participant as it is lived through the 'body of believers' (ibid.). This points to a fundamental difference between 'religiously affiliated' forms of spirituality and 'individualistic' forms. The former is attached to the 'congregation' of believers as confirmatory witness, whereas the latter attaches importance to the spiritual experience itself, equally in solitude or in a shared environment. Indeed, witnessing one's own experience is 'validation enough', whereas the implication here is that the collective 'affiliated religious' context legitimises the experience in some way, thereby enhancing its personal significance too. The religious context is also said to provide a religious community, which can offer 'non-essential' support, through 'stability or constancy' and shared philosophical vision, whereas spirituality places emphasis upon 'development' 'choice' and 'movement' implying that it lacks constancy and therefore support (ibid., 214).

To a large extent principles are conflated in 'theistic spiritualities of life' which combine Christian beliefs in a transcendent God and belief in an inner life force or the personal guidance of the Holy Spirit (Heelas, 2002, 366). Theistic spirituality, as it exists within traditional forms of religion such as Christianity, Judaism and Islam, is 'mysticism' as it is developed within these systems of worship. It is described as the 'unity between God and the believer' (Vincett and Woodhead, 2009, 329). The notion of 'oneness' and absolute communion with the divine is at the heart of theistic spiritualities and, as discussed above, this communion is often understood as a vitalising 'energy' that corresponds within and between self, other and environment. Theistic spiritualities encompass traditionalised and detraditionalised elements that combine the authority of tradition with the authority of personal experience (Heelas, 2002, 366). They

constitute a bridge between religion and spirituality that negates boundaries. This synthesis of traditional religion and detraditionalised spirituality can be found within the 'new paradigm churches' (ibid., Heelas quoting Donald Miller, 1997). These consist of particular forms of Evangelical Christian church, which provide a framework and support for congregational members to make sense of their 'spiritual journey'. Within this context, attention is given to spirituality 'of the heart' and the therapeutic aspects of personal development (ibid., 367). Interestingly, it is the churches that are adopting this individualistic approach to religion, and champion the 'unique value and dignity' of the individual, that are flourishing (Woodhead, 2009, 231). Acknowledgment of the saliency of the spiritual journey and the need to facilitate it within a traditional collective context is ensuring the longevity of these institutions.

Due to the emphasis on the subjective, boundaries between religion and spirituality are seemingly less evident in certain traditionalised religious settings. Theistic religions can also provide some forms of spirituality with 'greater rootedness in place and time' (Vincett and Woodhead, 2009, 329). Traditionalised forms of religious worship, either institutionalised or not, give credence to what can otherwise constitute amorphous forms of spirituality. Religious roots can provide a type of validation. A good example of the confluence of spiritual practice and theistic religion is the growing network of 'Quagans', which encompass the principles of both Quakerism and Paganism (ibid.; see also Vincett, 2007).

A threefold typology of religion proposed by Woodhead and Heelas (2000) encompasses the above principles and differentiates them in terms of 'religions

of difference', 'religions of humanity', and 'spiritualities of life' (Partridge, 2004, 28). The categorisations are subsequently elucidated as follows,

At one end of the spectrum there is religion which stresses boundaries between a transcendent God and a sinful humanity and between the fallen natural order and holy deity...characteristic of epistemologically authoritarian sectarian belief...At the other end of the spectrum is an immanentist type of religion, in which the boundaries between the sacred and profane are blurred. Such religion is essentially cultic, mystical..., and epistemologically individualist (ibid., 29).

This passage highlights the contrast between the tightly bounded forms of institutionalised religion and the more fluid forms of individualistic 'spiritualities of life', elucidated below. It is indicative of the 'turn to the self' and the concomitant 'shift from doctrine to techniques, to the facilitation of experience, and to the growth of the self' (ibid., 88). Essentially, the turn to the self is concerned with pragmatism and instituting change that will result in an improved quality of lived experience and subjective wellbeing. This will now be investigated through an elucidation of the 'subjectivisation thesis', to provide further clarification of the fundamental distinctions between what is essentially 'affiliated' religion and 'unaffiliated' spirituality.

1.3 The Subjectivisation Thesis

Heelas and Woodhead posit a 'subjectivisation thesis' based on the Durkheimian principle which states, that individuals in the modern West are most likely to

have involvement with those forms of the sacred that uphold what are described as 'life-as' or 'subjective life' principles (2005, 78). The thesis offers an explanation of the process that has resulted in the turn away from institutional religion, and the church in particular, and the consequent turn towards subjective-life spiritualities. This turn to the self is part of a larger cultural change that has been taking place incrementally since the late eighteenth century, and most prominently since the counter-cultural revolution of the 1960s (see Taylor, 2007). Indicative of this turn to the self is a philosophy that espouses epistemological individualism, that is, reliance upon the 'inner' authority of the self (as discussed above). Within the context of contemporary spirituality and popular culture, the subjective turn is increasingly evident, and it shall now be explored in greater detail, in the context of contemporary forms of spirituality.

1.3.1 The Subjective Turn

The subjective turn is 'a major cultural shift' that has taken place and, to some extent, now affects the lives of everyone (Heelas and Woodhead, 2005, 2). In the broader cultural context, it is defined by the emphasis placed on subjective, 'person-centred' experience. Examples of this can be seen within education, consumer culture, health, and the workplace. Significance has for some time now, been attached to experiences that are designated as, for example: 'child-centred'; 'learner-centred'; 'consumer-centred'; 'patient-centred'; the 'personal development of employees' (ibid., 5). Subjectivity infuses life in general and the subjective turn demarcates the turn away from previous hierarchical and authoritarian structures wherein the ultimate authority was invested in

teachers, doctors, clergy and business leaders, who effectively assumed god-like status within their particular field of expertise (ibid.).

It is perhaps not surprising that the subjective turn became prominent as a result of the counter-cultural revolution of the 1960s, although influential aspects of what constitutes the subjective turn are in evidence as early as the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, particularly within the Romantic movement (Vincett and Woodhead, 2009, 332; Heelas, 2008, 25; Taylor, 2007). In direct response to industrialisation and the positivist mind-set that prevailed, the Romantics exalted the virtues of creativity and expressivism, through the use of various art forms. Writers such as William Wordsworth in Britain, and Henry David Thoreau in North America, sought to express a deep connection with nature, as well as articulating the immanence of the divine. Indeed, the use of 'high Romantic words' that include 'life, love, liberty, hope and joy', are prevalent within the subjective turn, as it is witnessed today (Heelas, 2008, 27). The panentheistic approach to 'life' indicative of Romanticism can also be read as a direct response, rebellion even, to the prominent Christian ethic of the day. Nature and the natural environment was the Romantic's church, and great importance was attached to the deep contemplation and expression of nature, particularly through the arts. Fundamental to this is the notion of *life without* 'the God of transcendent theism' and simultaneously without the authority of traditionally hierarchical institutionalised religions, such as Christianity (ibid., 28). Romanticism is indicative of the turn towards the authority of the 'inner self' and forms of spirituality that sacralise lived experience.

The term 'subjective life' is used to articulate the notion of 'life lived in deep connection with the unique experiences of self-in-relation' to self, others,

environment and lived experience (Heelas and Woodhead, 2005, 3). Importance is attached to subjective decision-making and living a unique life, but this is undertaken with consideration of one's self in relation to other people and the wider environment. When lived subjectively, life is hallmarked by, for example: inner experience; somatic awareness; moral and ethical conscience; emotional intelligence; quality of life; personal and social integrity; authenticity and creativity. Subjective life is guided by an 'ethic of subjectivity', that prioritises: 'self-expression and fulfilment'; 'doing "what feels right"'; "'following your heart"'; and "'being true to yourself'" (ibid., 80). Adherents are classified as 'post-materialists' who seek to 'maximise subjective wellbeing' and who value these ethics over materialistic concerns (ibid., 79).

These 'subjective life' values contrast with 'life-as' forms of experience, which are dependent upon hierarchy and authoritarianism (ibid., 3). In the 'life-as' context, life is lived according to external expectations, and often with a rigid sense of duty, obligation and conformity. 'Life-as' is characterised by sacrifice and discipline, by living life 'unreflectively', for example: *as* 'a member of a community or tradition'; *as* a 'dutiful wife'; or *as* the 'strong leader' (ibid., 3, my emphasis). These externally derived values, in contrast to subjective life values, are often accompanied by feelings of guilt indicative of a life lived in accordance with a moral code that stems from how one thinks one 'should', or 'ought' to live life. Either one of these sets of values underpins and influences the person, their moral code and life experience.

The connection between life and self is 'spiritual', pivotal to which is an understanding of spirit as "'your" spirit', not the 'Holy Spirit' of transcendent theism (Heelas, 2008, 29). Indeed, spirit is the 'energising life-force', the 'energy'

that permeates all matter, and this is the basis of an egalitarian relationship with the divine. The relationship is fostered by 'getting in tune with what lies within' rather than 'reaching beyond oneself' to a transcendent godhead (ibid.). The inner connection reflects a primary relationship with the 'psychological self', and this tends to be articulated in terms of a 'lower' ego-driven 'state' or self, that is juxtaposed with a 'higher' wisdom state or self. The 'higher self' is common to both theistic and new age spiritualities of life. It is, in many respects, synonymous with the Christian doctrine of the Holy Spirit (divine immanence) and the notion of "'God" within' developed in some new age spiritualities (Heelas, 2002, 370). The 'lower' ego state represents the 'worldly' and somewhat 'misguided' aspects of the individual that lead to suffering. It may be concerned with pride, image, and the material life in general. It is characterised by human 'imperfection'. Achieving the 'higher self' state is the aim of personal development or spiritual growth, which is at the heart of the subjective turn. It brings one into 'alignment' with the 'deeper' or 'higher' *intuitive* aspects of the self. Living authentically and learning to acquiesce to the superior knowledge and guidance of the higher self is the epitome of the inner 'psychospiritual' life. The subjective life is by definition unique to each of us and the self and experience are regarded as spiritual. 'When spirituality *is* experienced as one's true, essential self, when spirituality *is* experienced as flowing through other aspects of one's life, it can but only serve to cater for one's distinctive *singular* life' (Heelas, 2008, 28, original emphases).

1.3.2 Spiritualities of Life

The term 'spiritualities *of* life' is differentiated from 'spiritualities *for* life' (Heelas, 2008, 28, original emphasis). The latter is concerned with spirituality as it is understood within the context of transcendent theism and, as such, it is synonymous with the 'life as' forms of spirituality. The external authority of life-as, or religion which encompasses spirituality, is the antithesis of the immanentist ontology of 'spiritualities of life, as it is essentially a 'monistic' ontology (ibid., 26). Within spiritualities *of* life, life itself is sacred. There is an emphasis on fully engaging the present moment and the experiences of 'mundane' life. It is understood that 'life-itself and the fulfilled experiential life' in particular, is of the utmost importance (ibid.). Life is the spiritual journey, and fulfilling one's human potential is the essence of that journey. This is a highly significant point, as it defines the philosophy that is central to the empirical research, discussed in Chapters 4 and 5. In addition, the focus upon the 'mundane present' is pivotal to 'applied mindfulness', which is also highly relevant here, and explicated in Chapter 3.

The milieu is complex, represented by a 'bricolage' of terminology, rituals and practices. The descriptive terminology used in conjunction with the subjective turn, and what Heelas previously referred to as 'self-spirituality', is 'inner-life spirituality', 'holistic spiritualities of life', or simply, 'spiritualities of life' (ibid.). 'Spiritualities of life' is a term that has evolved from rigorous theorising, and yet it could easily be construed as superficial or somewhat generic. However, it represents the spiritual importance attached to lived experience and the indistinguishable relationship that life shares with the self. Indeed, the turn to the self with its concomitant expressivistic and humanistic

values constitutes the *sacralisation* of life. Heelas explains the precise ways in which life is significant within the milieu, as follows,

For participants, spirituality *is* life-itself, the 'life-force' or 'energy' which flows through all human life (and much else besides), which sustains life, and which, when experienced, brings all of life 'alive'. For participants, spirituality *is* the truth of subjective-life, the truth of expressivity, love, harmony, vibrant health, agency; the essential truths *of* what it is to *be* alive (ibid., 27, original emphases and parentheses).

Upon reflection, it seems obvious that the spiritual should not be apart from life, that it is not something that one honours solely or primarily on a Sunday, for example. Similarly, spirituality cannot be distinct from the physical and psychological self, and the health thereof. Indeed, it is the sum of one's life and it is because life and self are synonymous that, they are equally revered to the point of sacralisation. However, this does not necessarily denote solipsism, or narcissism, aspersions that are frequently cast. If anything, the humanistic values prevalent within the milieu guard against potentially narcissistic tendencies and, in particular, the quest for personal wellbeing is understood to be a responsibility one upholds not only for oneself, but also for the benefit of others. Paradoxically, the quest for subjective wellbeing becomes altruistic, a universal imperative. From this humanistic perspective, ethical and moral directives are interwoven with the fabric of life, meaning and purpose encompass elevated visions that supplant the hedonistic and 'merely' consumeristic. Indeed, a sense of 'higher purpose' is the 'heart' of the 'matter'. It brings meaning to the material

realm and life-itself becomes sacred, reflecting the holistic spirituality that venerates the nurture of the self. Spiritualities of life are not concerned with the supernatural, and it is perhaps because *this* material experience is finite, that there is a temporal imperative to live with greater awareness of the whole of life. To live life to the full, not in a narcissistic or hedonistic sense, but wisely, compassionately, and creatively, in a way that honours humanistic and expressivistic values, self, other, and the environment.

'Life-itself' has become the focus of contemporary spirituality because many people, including advocates of new age principles, are no longer prepared to live their lives with a promise of salvation in an after-life (Heelas, 2002, 371). Both the new age and theistic varieties of spiritualities-of-life are flourishing because they attend to the subjective, immediate experience of being alive, 'in the expressive, creative, therapeutic, life-affirming here and now' (ibid., 372). The emphasis is on the *quality of this* life. It is not focused upon the 'life denying' forms of traditionalised religion, which exalt the value of suffering and sacrifice, as well as the allied preparation for a life beyond this earthly existence (ibid.). The therapeutic acknowledges the inner realm, which consists of the psychological and particularly the emotional aspects of the person. Importance is attached to personal 'spiritual' growth and *emotional* maturity. Gaining understanding of one's emotional self necessarily involves heightened somatic awareness, because the body is a vehicle for emotion and feelings (see Riis and Woodhead, 2010). Ultimately, the body is sacralised because it is the vessel for living *this* life.

Contemporary spirituality 'of life' therefore envelops physical health and psychological wellbeing. It is holistic. It seeks the wholeness of the self as an

imperative of the human condition. It is the 'essence' of religion, but it does not necessitate adherence to religious doctrines. It is grounded in everyday experiences of life, and it may, but does not always relate to a transcendent state of being. Importantly it is a spirituality emanating from life-itself and therefore, by association, the self.

1.4 The Holistic Milieu: A Therapeutic Paradigm

As established, the subjective turn is synonymous with the move away from institutionalised religion and the migration towards spirituality. This is in turn indicative of the holistic milieu and what has become a 'therapeutic paradigm'. Insight into the holistic principles of the milieu is gained from an investigation of the linguistics commonly used. Words such as 'harmony', 'balance', 'flow', 'integration', 'interaction', 'being at one' and 'being centred' are identified as significant (Heelas and Woodhead, 2005, 26). These are terms, which relate to the condition of subjective wellbeing, that is, the psychological and physical 'wholeness' of the individual. Psychological and physical 'healing', which is pivotal to wellbeing, requires the restoration of 'harmony, balance and flow' by overcoming 'energetic' deficiencies that prevent subjective wellbeing, which must occur simultaneously at the physical, emotional, and spiritual level, in order to prevent 'dis-ease' (ibid.). Dis-ease, which may manifest as physical illness, therefore serves as a metaphor for unresolved 'metaphysical', specifically emotional issues (Hay, 1989). The non-physical elements of the self, and particularly the emotional aspects, influence the physiology and therefore must be ameliorated. Holistic therapies amalgamate the spiritual and physical realms by providing therapeutic treatments that are intended to heal the 'mind, body

and spirit'. The restoration of 'energy' which is also referred to as 'chi', 'prana', or 'true nature' is the goal of the 'personal healing process' that defines the therapeutic paradigm (ibid., 27). In this context, the 'spiritual' level is defined as 'that in which all things come together, and in which each life reconnects with its deepest dimension' (ibid.).

The significance of adopting a holistic approach to physical health and psychological wellbeing, of treating the 'whole' person, is increasingly widely acknowledged. This is reflected in the growing numbers of people seeking alternatives to the use of pharmaceuticals, which are known to have potentially harmful side-effects. In 2001 complimentary and alternative forms of medicine (CAM) typically of a holistic nature, were being offered by almost half of the general medical practices in England (Heelas, 2008, 67).

The holistic milieu embraces the practices and contingent philosophies of Eastern spiritualities such as yoga, tai chi and reiki, which acknowledge the psychological, spiritual and physical elements of the self. The therapeutic milieu constitutes a highly pragmatic application of these practices, which may be used to maintain health and wellbeing, although most are probably initially engaged to overcome both psychological and physical dis-ease. Applied in this way, the myriad techniques of the therapeutic paradigm can be the catalyst for the individual to 'turn to the self', with issues concerning the physical body in particular, being a vehicle for the introduction to the principles of holism. Those undergoing treatment may initially connect with spiritualities of life to ameliorate dis-ease, however, over time practices often assume sacred status. It is important to emphasise that 'recruitment' into spiritual practice is usually entirely passive, and there is rarely any coercion on the part of the therapist

(Vincett and Woodhead, 2009, 324). No one is actively seeking to convert participants. It is more likely that they encounter philosophies and practices that they find meaningful, and because they make a significant impact upon their health and wellbeing, people 'enrol' themselves.

'Holistic spiritualities' is another term used to demarcate the 'mind, body and spirit' (MBS) practices indicative of the therapeutic paradigm (Sointu and Woodhead, 2008, 259). Holistic spiritualities are 'roughly coterminous' with subjective life spiritualities described above (ibid.). The term is representative of the subjective turn and includes the full spectrum of MBS and CAM practices to which increasing numbers of people are turning. This reflects statistics that show 10 - 20 per cent of the population in Britain identify themselves as 'spiritual not religious' or believe in 'some sort of a spirit or life force' (World Values Survey), and 20 - 40 per cent who perceive 'God as something within each person rather than something out there' (RAMP) (ibid.). Holistic spiritualities, which espouse integration and wholeness, often include body-centric practices that acknowledge 'soul' and 'spirit', whilst emphasising the importance of 'self-awareness', 'self-acceptance' and 'self-fulfilment' (ibid., 266). This form of 'psychotherapeutic' development, which is reliant upon self-awareness and self-acceptance, fosters authenticity and greater personal fulfilment, and this in turn ensures subjective wellbeing. The psychological self and its wellbeing are highly significant in the therapeutic paradigm, and it is pivotal to the empirical study conducted as part of this research project.

1.4.1 Subjective Wellbeing Culture

As discussed, the holistic milieu and subjective wellbeing culture (SWC) are interdependent. The holistic milieu has a bias towards health in a very general sense, and towards healing in the very specific sense of making the self whole. Subjective wellbeing culture is a cultural paradigm within which the holistic milieu sits. It exhibits many of the characteristics that define the subjective turn, with its emphasis on the self, inner authority, personal experience, learning, self-improvement, uniqueness, the 'spiritual' journey or path, feeling good about oneself, psychologies, and relationships. It is described as 'the most widespread expression of the subjective turn to date' and manifestations of this shift are increasingly evident in the cultural approach to a diversity of phenomena such as food, travel, and palliative care (Heelas and Woodhead, 2005, 83). Accordingly, 'subjectivized wellbeing culture has developed into a major sphere of provision and activity', that is evident in bookstores, advertising campaigns and even corporate branding (ibid., 86).

Significantly, importance is now attached culturally, to the defining characteristics of the subjective turn and the holistic milieu, as the ethos of the movement pervades life in general. The expression of a broadly defined holistic 'spirituality of life', relevant to Westerners, is becoming increasingly prevalent. For example, the Kendal Project (2000-2002) concludes that the holistic milieu and subjective wellbeing culture in Britain are flourishing, and predicts that the 'spiritual revolution' will continue (ibid., 135). The ubiquity of SWC is a reflection of its broad appeal, and this, combined with the diversity of contexts within which it may be found, indicates that the facilitation of a therapeutic workshop based upon SWC principles, can feasibly be organised and facilitated within a workplace setting, for research purposes.

The term 'therapeutic culture' is also synonymous with subjective wellbeing culture (Vincett and Woodhead, 2009, 332). The philosophy of Carl Jung is cited in this respect as shaping the new age movement, as is that of the psychologist Carl Rogers, whose 'person-centred' psychotherapeutic approach to counselling has widely influenced culture in more general terms. Indeed, as described above, the latter has led to the prioritisation of the learner, patient, and consumer 'centred' experience. Having grown out of Abraham Maslow's humanistic 'lineage' and the Human Potential Movement of the 1950s, Rogers' philosophy speaks of authenticity, non-judgment, and the realisation of the self as a 'fully-functioning' person. To function 'fully' is seen as the epitome of subjective, specifically 'eudaimonic' wellbeing (see Chapter 3). Within this context, the 'therapeutic' is more than simply 'remedial'. It is less concerned with overcoming dis-ease, although this is inevitably a part of the process, and more concerned with achieving one's human potential and reaping the associated 'psychospiritual' benefits. The principles of the therapeutic culture are specifically *psychotherapeutic*. They cohere with the turn to the self and have undoubtedly contributed to it. The concepts of reflexivity and authenticity are highly significant in the therapeutic context, and therefore they require further interrogation and clarification. In the following two sections these principles are unpacked, and preliminary associations with mindfulness are explicated in order to establish its validity as a method of self-development that will provide self-knowledge and self-understanding fundamental to the turn to the self.

1.5 Self as 'Reflexive Project'

The therapeutic process requires the acquisition of self-knowledge gained from self-awareness and self-reflection. The process is described as a complex 'expression of the reflexivity of the self', which encapsulates a broad range of existential concerns, from personal anxieties to human potential (Giddens, 1991, 34). It requires not only reflexivity of the self and the self-awareness commensurate with that, but also the expression of the perceptions gained from the process, which must be communicated in verbal, written, or visual form. Dialogue with an impartial witness, the use of a written journal, or some other form of creative self-expression, are all suitable methods of therapeutic communication. The following section expounds upon this to some extent and also establishes tentative links with mindfulness, which is discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

The term 'reflexive awareness' is used to describe the process of discursive self-monitoring that fosters awareness and understanding of the self, experienced privately and publicly, from moment to moment (ibid., 35). The contrast is made between 'discursive consciousness' which relies upon cognition, and 'practical consciousness' which is the unconscious participation in mundane tasks that are undertaken automatically and do not rely on cognition (ibid., 36). Within the context of mindfulness, the latter is referred to as being 'on autopilot'. It is the opposite of mindfulness, just as it is the opposite of discursive consciousness, or reflexive awareness. The 'self' is referred to as a 'reflexive project', one that engenders authenticity through the realisation of its goals of self-actualisation and personal mastery (ibid., 9). The reflexive project is a therapeutic process. As elucidated above, the commencement of the therapeutic 'journey' is usually initiated in response to pathology, but may result in the

search for authenticity and self-actualisation, which are fundamental to subjective wellbeing.

In order to elucidate the principles of the turn to the self, an explication of 'self-therapy' is provided by Anthony Giddens, through a reading of Janette Rainwater's *Self-Therapy: A Guide to Becoming Your Own Therapist*. The book is described as highly idiosyncratic but it emphasises the therapeutic principles succinctly, hence its inclusion here. It provides essential insight into the significance of reflexivity or self-reflection, which is the systematic observation and review of lived experience fundamental to the therapeutic process. The therapeutic process is a process of personal development that demands 'present awareness', described as a holistic awareness of the self that includes physiological aspects such as the breath (ibid., 71). The focus on the embodied self and particularly on the breath is also integral to mindfulness practice, thus signalling the use of mindfulness as an appropriate reflexive practice.

Reflexivity is the conduit for personal change, and through practice it amplifies awareness of the self in the present moment. The practitioner learns to assume responsibility for their actions and begins to see directly the cause and effect relationship, particularly how decision-making and choice impacts upon lived experience. This is termed 'autobiographical thinking' and it is central to the process of 'self-therapy' (ibid., 72). However, it applies equally to all therapeutic methods, as they each require some form of autobiographical account of the lived experience. The verbal account is requisite when using an intermediary such as a therapist, but a self-reflective journal is beneficial as a form of self-therapy. A written journal is a form of 'intervention'. It will aid the reflexive process, and it may be used as an adjunct to facilitated forms of

psychotherapy, or self-therapy. Autobiographical thinking determines the future through the resolution of the emotional past, by overcoming 'emotional blocks and tensions' that hinder self-understanding and self-development (ibid., 78). It is also necessary to engage with the reflexive process in order to realise how cognition, emotion and behaviour in the present, determine future lived experience. Reflexivity is central to the self-paradigm and consequently, it is central to the empirical research design explicated in Chapter 4. Specifically, the reflexive work that was undertaken by the participants during a series of one-day workshops was consolidated using autobiographical thinking recorded in a written journal. Participants were encouraged to keep a self-reflective journal to assist with their personal development and in order to provide qualitative data for research purposes.

The self-reflective method explicated above is still relevant today. It shares a common ethos with much of the self-help literature currently available. From this account it is apparent that the therapeutic paradigm utilises 'applied' mindfulness practices, although alternative terminology is often used to elucidate this. Indeed, from this elucidation of the principles of the turn to the self and from additional evidence presented above, mindfulness appears to be a practice that embodies the turn to the self and this may partially account for its current resurgence.

As elucidated, the goal of the therapeutic process is the actualisation of the *authentic self*. Through the reflexive process the 'true self', which is '*internally referential*' can emerge (ibid., 80, original emphasis). Authenticity is dependent upon a set of values and beliefs that are subjectively defined, a principle that is pivotal to the therapeutic paradigm and the turn to the self, with their shared

ethos of autonomy. The embodiment of authenticity and its expression is the ultimate goal of turning to the self in all of the contexts described above. Hence it requires further elucidation.

1.6 Authenticity and the Authentic Self

The term 'postmodern spirituality' has been used to delineate 'the religion of the self', which emphasises the importance of personal development and in particular 'individualism' and 'following one's inner voice' (Hanegraaf, 2010, 351 and 352). Listening to one's inner guidance, or intuition, has become a hallmark of postmodern spirituality, because the expression of the 'authentic self' is paramount. Authenticity takes precedence within spirituality and it has also been the subject of both psychological and philosophical discourse on the self (Harter, 2002; Taylor, 1991). It is pivotal to psychotherapy (Bugental, 1965). In addition, it is a topic of interest within the context of leadership development in the workplace (Gardner, Avolio and Walumbwa, 2005). Each of these paradigms can contribute to the current discourse and provide insight that is relevant.

Authenticity, as discussed above, is contingent upon 'knowing oneself' and a congruence that results in behaving in accordance with that knowledge, and of 'being true to oneself' (Harter, 2002, 382; Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans and May, 2004, 802; Klenke, 2005, 159). It results from the recognition and respect of the originality of the self, of 'what it is to be ourselves' (Taylor, 1991, 61). It is a notion of 'freedom' within which the courage to define and live a self-styled life without conformity to external authority is requisite (ibid., 67-68). Authenticity is synonymous with personal harmony and it is an outcome of living by the '*right* rules', which are subjectively defined (ibid., 63, original emphasis).

There is a moral imperative inherent in the quest for authenticity. Being true to oneself is pivotal, but it is also contingent upon respect for other, and outcomes that are mutually beneficial. Authenticity is not solely a matter of autonomy it is also one of ethicality and morality. It is an existential issue that pervades human life and therefore influences subjective wellbeing.

Significantly, the authentic person has 'optimal self-esteem' that is the result of their ability to confront life's challenges in a way that embodies the values of the 'true' or 'core' self (Kernis, 2003, 13). In addition, having the ability to *express* one's true self is acknowledged as an important aspect of being authentic (Harter, 2002, 387). High self-esteem is identified with the ability to express one's self congruently, a process that is shown to be enabled through the application of mindfulness practice (Lahey, Kernis, Heppner and Lance, 2008). Psychological research confirms a link between self-expression, authenticity and self-esteem, and also the connection with subjective wellbeing (Ryff and Singer, 2008). 'Being authentic' is more than simply pleasing one's self, it demands integrity and living in accordance with beliefs and values that are essentially ethical and therefore promote the peace of mind requisite for subjective wellbeing.

The connection between authenticity and psychotherapy is explicit within the existential-analytic approach to psychotherapy, where it is identified as the central concern of the therapeutic process (Bugental, 1965). Existentialism has contributed to psychology, a point acknowledged by Abraham Maslow in reference to the 'fully evolved and authentic Self' (Maslow, 1968, 20). Indeed, both Maslow's concept of the 'actualised self' and Rogers' notion of the 'fully functioning person', are coterminous with authentic selfhood (Rogers, 1961,

183). Specifically, the process of successful psychotherapy mobilises inner resources and the process of self-understanding that is essential for personal growth (Rogers, 1980, 115). In this context, growth refers to psychological flexibility, emotional maturity, openness, and ‘complete congruence’, which is coterminous with authenticity and also ‘transparency’ (Patterson and Watkins, 1996, 397). To expound, Roger’s states, ‘when a person is functioning fully, there are no barriers, no inhibitions...this person is moving in the direction of wholeness, integration, a unified life’ (1980, 128). Indeed, when a person is functioning fully, they are authentic and the healing, therapeutic process renders them ‘whole’. Wholeness is interpreted as ‘the full realization of uniqueness’ and ‘holistic spiritualities’, which mobilise wholeness, are identified as being interconnected with authenticity and also the emotions (Sointu and Woodhead, 2008, 266, 259). Specifically, ‘authentic selfhood’ is sourced from within, from ‘the inner life of the *emotions* and the spirit’ (ibid., 264, 265, my emphasis).

As demonstrated, authenticity is pivotal to the spiritual or psychotherapeutic process, and this process, which is one of healing and making whole, is central to the therapeutic paradigm. It is an intrapersonal developmental process contingent upon the emotions. It is sometimes designated as spiritual and sometimes as psychological, but perhaps more accurately, it is also identified as ‘psychospiritual’.

1.7 The Psychospiritual Paradigm

In his thesis on the psychospiritual paradigm, Victor Schermer confirms much of what has been stated above. Upholding notions of wholeness and integration, spirituality is described as a ‘psychological process’ and ‘spirit, matter, and

energy' are identified as coterminous (2003, 28). A deconstruction of the boundary between psychoanalysis and spirituality results in the psychospiritual paradigm and 'deep emotional insight' which is the outcome of the self-reflective process (ibid., 14). Spirituality is understood as a 'psychological construct', distinct from theistic religion (ibid., 28). The psychospiritual approach to psychotherapeutic intervention is a holistic approach to the emotional development of the individual. Ideally, it enables the understanding and assimilation of experience, not merely as a psychological process, but as a 'deeper, healing spirituality' that reaches beyond the purely biological and social needs of the individual (ibid., 107-8).

The widespread understanding within psychology of the need for spiritually-oriented qualities such as 'connectedness, creativity and self actualization' to attain psychological wellbeing, is also acknowledged (ibid., 107). Wellbeing is clearly more than a lack of pathology, and spirituality plays a pivotal role in the psychotherapeutic healing process that results in wellbeing. The psychospiritual self, synonymous with the true or authentic self delineated above, seeks to transcend the ego in order to attain 'spiritual fulfilment' by accessing the transcendent aspects of the self, particularly inherent healing capacities (ibid., 109, 38). In this context, rather than fostering dependency on the perceived 'authority' of a trained therapist, therapeutic culture seeks to instill a belief in self-efficacy in its participants.

The psychospiritual paradigm is the confluence of the self: mind, body, spirit, and its relationships. As such, it is indicative of life itself. In keeping with the turn to the self "*the fundamental spiritual element of psychology is...life as it is lived, the actual individual journey from birth to death*" (ibid., 23-4, original

emphasis). The use of the 'journey' metaphor along with the emphasis on lived experience, are indicative of subjectivity as it is defined within the literature on the subjective turn also. The terms 'process' and 'journey' are interchangeable and found within both sets of literature, as are the terms 'healing' and 'therapeutic'. The emotions are common to both the spiritual journey and the psychotherapeutic process, hence, 'psychospiritual emotions' are delineated by Schermer (see below). The management of emotion, through 'emotional development' is fundamental to the therapeutic process indicative of both. The 'journey' then, is a form of emotional development that unfolds over the course of a lifetime. The self is essentially emotional. It consists of the 'true self', which is authentic and embraces emotion, and the 'false self' which seeks to avoid emotion (ibid., 119-120).

The psychospiritual paradigm is a confluence of the psychological and spiritual, but none the less, the two are not indistinguishable. Each serves a discrete purpose, but their combination is greater than the sum of the parts. Specifically, 'meditation strengthens one transpersonally, but psychotherapy is often needed to enhance the true self's ability to regulate the balance between spiritual needs, relationships, ambitions, and daily life' (ibid., 121). Meditation and reflexivity in combination foster integration and wholeness, and therefore subjective wellbeing. Meditation in general, and mindfulness meditation in particular, provides a means of increasing self-awareness, compassion, appreciation and other 'spiritual' qualities, whereas reflexivity enables the assimilation and integration of this knowledge and understanding into lived experience. Meditative practice must be 'applied to' or 'grounded in' lived experience, in order to constitute a purposeful practice. This reiterates the point

that spirituality is not something other than life. It is life as it is lived, and the emotions are a fundamental part of the journey, because they determine the *quality* of lived experience.

1.7.1. The Psychospiritual Emotions

The emotions in general are significant, but the potency of emotions and their effects vary. Commonplace 'mundane' emotions and their psychospiritual counterparts both serve 'adaptive' functions, but of different types (ibid., 133). The psychospiritual emotions are defined by their intensity and their ability to transform the personality and one's perspective of lived experience and the wider world. They are comprised of two categories of emotion, commonly judged as either 'positive' and 'embracing [or] accepting', or as 'negative' which pose a 'threat to the spiritual core' (ibid., 134). It is not uncommon to be attached to the 'positive' emotions and have an aversion to the 'negative'. However, as elucidated below, *both* categories have value based on their transformative capacity.

The psychospiritual emotions are defined as follows (ibid., 134-140). The positive psychospiritual emotions are (i) love, (ii) serenity, (iii) ecstasy and (iv) awe.

- (i) Love is differentiated from desire. It is a 'spiritual love' that involves whole brain function (ibid., 134). It activates both hemispheres of the brain and therefore provides an inclusive and balanced perspective that embraces self, other, and the environment. It ensures that reason works in conjunction with emotion, in order to gain perspective on

emotional attachments that inevitably form throughout life. It encompasses a compassionate attitude.

- (ii) Serenity is equated with 'acceptance of life', and is likened to the emotional state of 'bliss' rather than that of calmness (ibid.). It is the result of spiritual practice, such as meditation and contemplation, and is indicative of 'being in the flow' of life.
- (iii) Ecstasy is described as 'almost painfully extreme and sustained pleasure and joy', although it is not of a sensory nature (ibid., 135). It is indicative of feelings of oneness and limitlessness and is signified by a shift in awareness and attention, rather than sensory stimulation. It is the result of 'psychobiological release' and is simultaneously 'neuromuscular, emotional and cognitive' (ibid., 135).
- (iv) Awe is a response to experiences of 'God', and involves experiences of extreme beauty, that includes nature and the arts (ibid., 136). It encompasses a sense of wonder at the magnificence of life and leaves one feeling insignificant and yet paradoxically retaining a strong sense of self.

The ability of the four positive emotions to transform personal experience is perhaps more obvious than that of the negative emotions, (i) rage, (ii) terror, (iii) despair, and (iv) grief, which accompany 'trauma and loss' (ibid.). These emotions can be debilitating, they are not inherently transformative but they carry within them the seeds of 'profound inner change', precisely because they pose a threat to the psychospiritual self (ibid.). Schermer states, 'they are "rock-bottom" emotional responses to violations of self and the loss of safety, identity, continuity, and dignity. They are spiritual because they cannot be resolved

without a significant transformation of self' (ibid., 140). Adversity and its concomitant emotions provide an opportunity to learn about the self. They are therapeutic. It is possible to mature spiritually and psychologically as a result of living through the process.

- (i) Rage is a response to something that is completely unacceptable. It is an extreme form of anger in response to a violation of the self. It is an intense amalgam of 'anger, helplessness and grief' that results from a moral violation (ibid., 137). Its acknowledgment and expression signify hope and amelioration, and the possibility of moving forward in life.
- (ii) Terror is an extreme form of fear, and it therefore has healing potential. Uncommon moments of terror drive one inward and result in the redefinition of the self. The confrontation and survival of such extreme adversity results in personal insight and self-trust. An example involving Buddhist meditation is used to illustrate this point, 'the meditation gave him the inner resources to survive and grow...enabling the detachment he needed for the more difficult and treacherous times in life' (ibid., 138).
- (iii) Despair is often a suicidal state, one of complete depression and darkness that has no perception of resolution. Submission to this emotion is preferable to avoidance, and can result in 'clarity', a 'spiritual awakening' or 'mystical vision' (ibid.). This requires the dissociation from the illusory nature of life, and severing unfounded beliefs, often about the self.

(iv) Grief is synonymous with depression and it represents feelings of 'worthlessness' and 'hopelessness' (ibid., 139). It comes from a sense of profound loss, and it is described as working like a homeopathic medicine, 'like' curing 'like'. Grief is the antidote to the extreme insecurity experienced through letting go of personal attachments.

It must be stressed that Schermer is elucidating the potency of these negative emotions to initiate transformation as they are faced within a therapy context. However, this elucidation demonstrates the interconnection of emotions, and how the negative emotions can be transformative. From this explication, emotion can be understood to exist on a continuum from positive to negative, with less extreme emotions that are more commonly experienced in daily life, existing between the two.

This account of the psychospiritual paradigm and the psychospiritual emotions serves as an introduction to the centrality of the emotions in subjective wellbeing culture. Awareness, management and transformation of emotion are all pivotal to the therapeutic journey that is fundamental to wellbeing.

1.8 Concluding Comments

This inaugural chapter gives insight into the subjective turn, subjective wellbeing culture and the psychospiritual or therapeutic culture that is indicative of both. Importantly, it establishes the interconnection between self, life, spirituality and the therapeutic, all of which are encompassed in subjective wellbeing culture and by the generic term 'personal development'. It provides initial insight into the significance of the emotions and lived experience, and introduces the notion of

mindfulness practice as a suitable psychospiritual personal development technique. Through this elucidation the significance of the emotions and particularly emotional development as a therapeutic method common to psychological and spiritual development, has also begun to emerge. Now that the therapeutic ethos has been identified as an inherent aspect of subjective wellbeing culture, it is necessary to expound upon the relationship between the therapeutic process and the emotions. Chapter 2 provides a rigorous interrogation of therapy culture and demonstrates how this has created a concurrent culture of emotionalism. Significantly, it establishes the significant contribution that can be made to wellbeing as a result of greater emotional awareness and expression.

Chapter 2: The Emotional Turn.

2.1 Introduction

As Chapter 1 demonstrates, there is an evolving psychospiritual paradigm that has emerged over the past half century, a defining feature of which is the blurring of boundaries between the spiritual and psychological. Chapter 2 examines the argument that the increased psychologisation of life and the use of therapeutic language have led to what has been described as ‘therapy culture’ and a ‘culture of emotionalism’ (Furedi, 2002, 2004). Through an unpacking of Furedi’s thesis, it has been possible to consolidate knowledge and confirm that there has been a ‘therapeutic turn’ and that a shift toward expressivism is correlated to this. However, it is important to stress that causation remains unproven. This chapter ascertains the centrality of emotion to individual lived experience, through an interrogation of the culture that has developed around it, and it proposes that emotional development may be an important form of personal development or ‘healing’, because it bridges the divide between the spiritual and psychological. It also begins to provide understanding of the broad appeal of the therapeutic milieu by establishing how its proponents benefit from participation. In addition it serves to demystify the turn to the self, by unpacking aspects of expressivism and the therapeutic process, in order to determine the salient aspects of the process, and this provides a thoroughfare for the empirical research that follows in Chapter 4.

2.2. Therapy Culture

According to Frank Furedi (2004), since the 1970s Britain has witnessed the emergence of a therapy culture, which is increasingly responsible for influencing

self-perception and meaning making. Furedi argues that there is a cultural trend to consistently place attention upon the detrimental emotional impact of challenging everyday experiences, and that this has resulted in the erosion of self-esteem. His theoretical stance challenges the efficacy of the prevalent psychological narrative, which he says is responsible for producing a risk-averse culture, and individuals who identify negatively with the inherent vulnerability of being human. Elements of his argument will now be interrogated in order to provide understanding of the cultural changes that have taken place and the contribution that these have made to the psychospiritual paradigm.

Furedi expresses a personal discomfort with the language of therapeutics in general, and specifically with psychological terms that were largely unknown to the majority of people until the 1990s (ibid., 2). He argues that the use of 'psychological labels and therapeutic terms' such as 'generalised anxiety disorder (being worried)', 'social anxiety disorder (being shy)', 'social phobia (being really shy)' and 'free-floating anxiety (not knowing what you are worried about)', is symbolic of the exponential use of psychological language indicative of therapy culture (ibid.). Accordingly, he posits that there is a growing tendency to pathologise what he interprets as the 'common' psychological issues (as noted above). Obviously, these issues are commonly experienced, although inevitably, to varying degrees of severity. There is a minority of people who experience them in the extreme, and for whom anxiety disorders become debilitating and prevent 'daily functioning' and for this minority the conditions constitute psychopathology (Cooper, 2008, 171). Indeed, it is usually *only* at this juncture, when common issues begin to restrict life and obscure everyday functioning that professional help is sought, and a specific diagnosis such as those listed above, is

applied (ibid., 45). The psychological terminology is of course utilised by psychotherapeutic professionals in order to specify particular anxiety-related issues and enable the correct diagnosis and treatment. However, it is highly unlikely that the terminology is familiar to the majority of lay people, thus preventing it from having the impact he suggests. Implicit in his argument also, is the trivialisation of certain mental health disorders. This is particularly insensitive and unconstructive, and contributes to the existing lack of understanding that results in stigmatisation.

He condemns the very specific psychological terminology which aids diagnosis, and also expresses an aversion to the increased use of more commonly used non-scientific, popular psychological language, in addition to words such as 'healing' and 'closure' (Furedi, 2004, 2). Anecdotal and statistical evidence is provided to demonstrate the increased use of words that are indicative of the therapeutic turn. In particular, the use in British newspapers of the term 'self-esteem' is charted over a twenty-one year period from 1980-2001, and the prevalence of the terms 'trauma', 'stress', 'syndrome' and 'counselling' between 1993 and 2000 (ibid., 2-7). Consequently, he argues that therapeutic terminology has taken a cultural hold and that such nomenclature reflects increased awareness and shifting trends that point to a problematic aspect of therapy culture: 'Therapeutic culture today offers a distinct view about the nature of human beings. It tends to regard people's emotional state as peculiarly problematic and at the same time as defining their identity' (ibid., 22). Furedi is concerned that therapy culture, which is underpinned by emotionalism has led to the normalisation of notions of 'emotional deficit', and 'low self-esteem', and 'emotional vulnerability' in particular (ibid., 4-5). This widespread belief in

emotional deficiency, he claims, has increasingly led people to seek professional therapeutic intervention for 'common problems' that *he* deems people ought to be able to manage themselves. "Today we fear that individuals lack the resilience to deal with feelings of isolation, disappointment and failure. Through pathologising negative emotional responses to the pressures of life, contemporary culture unwittingly encourages people to feel traumatised and depressed by experiences hitherto regarded as routine' (ibid., 6).

Furedi's concern is that the use of 'therapeutic' discourse influences self-perception and consequently undermines an individual's innate emotional resources. However, while it is difficult to deny the emergence of a therapy culture over recent decades, one has to ask whether the two are necessarily causally related. According to Furedi, emotional development is now culturally synonymous with help-seeking behaviour, which he claims is on the increase, and its antithesis, 'self-reliance and self-control', is increasingly considered as a weakness (ibid., 34). Paradoxically, the turn to the self is interpreted as being commensurate with a turn away from autonomy, and toward professionals who can mediate emotion and lived experience.

Obviously, the language of any culture is simply one way amongst many to frame meaning. Therapeutic discourse has proved to be a popular vocabulary through which an understanding of life, experiences, and the self, are sought. Its prevalence is a reflection of the innate need we have to 'make sense' of the human condition. The *secular* 'scientific' language and its popular psychological counterparts provide an alternative language to that of religion, and it has consequently become mainstream. People equate with it because it is 'of life', free from the often dogmatic and archaic terminology of religious discourse. This

psychological emphasis is confirmed within the literature on subjective wellbeing culture also, where it is explained that the use of psychological discourse in areas as diverse as health care, advertising, workplace training, schools, supermarkets, and the media is now widespread (Heelas and Woodhead, 2005, 84-85). Furedi too, demonstrates convincingly that a shift has occurred, but is unconvincing in his argument that it is detrimental to individual self-esteem. Thankfully, stigma regarding mental health issues is waning due to an increase in educational campaigns, which have no doubt contributed to increasing numbers of people *willing* to seek professional help when dealing with emotional issues. Indeed, this is made clear in an important report produced by the British Association of Counsellors and Psychotherapists (BACP). It states that 82 per cent of the adult population in Britain 'have had or would consider having counselling or psychotherapy', thus reflecting a widespread acknowledgement of the sometimes overwhelming difficulty of dealing with emotional issues in isolation (2004, 17). However, it is a huge leap to speculate from this statistic, that it is commensurate with inadequate self-reliance. Indeed, it is open to debate whether this undermines or fosters autonomy in the long-term, and Furedi offers no incontrovertible evidence to prove that the shift is detrimental.

Furedi acknowledges that therapeutic discourse currently provides the most significant symbolism for meaning making, and that it has subordinated this function within traditional religious systems (2004, 22-23). However, he claims that therapeutic discourse constitutes a less rigorous and searching method of meaning making than religious doctrine, and speculates that this may account for its popularity. He states that 'there are no longer sinners only

addictive personalities' and that the therapeutic terminology absolves 'sinners' of personal responsibility (ibid., 115). Consequently, he equates therapy culture with the avoidance of personal responsibility, and argues that the designation of a personality as 'addictive' results in a sense of victimhood and powerlessness, and that this in turn creates a belief that the individual is not responsible for their behaviour and its outcomes. Under these circumstances personal destiny is determined to be beyond personal control and this is taken to be synonymous with the erosion of autonomy. This is contrary to the argument posited in the BACP report however, which states that therapy *enables* personal responsibility and that engaging in therapy is indicative of 'the desire to take *more* responsibility for one's actions' (2004, 11, my emphasis). The BACP suggests that people are drawn to counselling and psychotherapy precisely because they wish to assume responsibility for their life, and that this principle is commensurate with the ethos of the 'development of the self' and 'self-fulfilment', both indicative of the subjective turn (ibid.). The report provides insight and evidence based upon experience in the field, including qualitative and quantitative empirical enquiry, whereas Furedi offers an analysis based largely on conjecture.

Philip Rieff also acknowledges that there has been a subordination of religious frames of meaning in preference for the therapeutic. With reference to Carl Jung, he delineates a move specifically from the 'Christian myth' to the 'personal myth' a shift that Jung sought in his own life in order to achieve the psychological wellbeing that eluded his father, a Christian minister (Rieff, 1966, 108). This is said to be indicative of the shift from the external to the internal search for meaning and what is described as 'the therapeutic effect' (ibid., 109). Speaking of 'the triumph of the therapeutic', he makes explicit the significance of

psychotherapy in shaping culture (ibid., 233). He too, contends that therapy culture is deeply concerned with the 'forgiveness of sin', and equates this with a justification for hedonistic and narcissistic behaviour, rather than focusing upon the *significance* of forgiveness. Likewise, Christopher Lasch argues that there has been a turn from seeking redemption, which has resulted in an appetite for 'personal well-being, health, and psychic security' (1979, 7). Lasch, like Furedi, describes the therapeutic process as narcissistic and concerned with the instant gratification of personal needs in preference to subordinating oneself to the service of others. He posits that the latter half of the twentieth century was responsible for the advent of 'the "psychological man"' whose imperative for "'mental health'", and specifically the attainment of inner peace, subordinated the quest for salvation (ibid., 13). It is argued that the therapist has taken the place of the priest, and that this has led to 'the triumph of the therapeutic' (ibid.). From this perspective, the therapeutic imperative is in limbo between the scientific and the religious because it constitutes neither, and it is rendered symbolic of narcissistic self-indulgence, which is defined by the desire for continual self-improvement (ibid., 91-92). He acknowledges the importance attached to self-awareness within the therapeutic paradigm, but dismisses it as a 'cliché' that lacks profundity (ibid., 15). Hence, like Rieff and Furedi, he questions the fundamental morality of those engaged in the therapeutic quest for personal wellbeing. However, these views seem somewhat contradictory. For example, there is an implicit assumption that it is not possible to pursue self-development *and* maintain empathy and altruism. That it is not possible to pursue wellbeing *and* make a responsible contribution to society. Whereas, in reality the motivation to become 'a better person' may well be partially derived from a

desire to be socially more adept, and therefore improve relationships and lived experience for one's self *and* others. It seems that these commentators are making their judgments of psychological 'man' based on information gained from an etic perspective, and they clearly demonstrate that this does not ensure objectivity any more than an emic perspective necessarily constitutes bias. Indeed, it highlights the need for research that involves 'complete immersion' in the field, to attain evidence based on *participation* rather than merely observing and judging from the periphery.

Rieff, Lasch and Furedi provide a consensus regarding the psychologisation of the self and life, and the concomitant search for subjective wellbeing through increased self-awareness, but they fail to provide conclusive evidence that the cultural shift is representative of narcissism, 'new' or 'old', or that it has been detrimental to the individual or society. In addition, it cannot be scientifically proven that the therapeutic imperative has created a need as argued, any more than it can be proven to have fulfilled an existing need, although given understanding of the nature of the human condition reason dictates that the latter is more likely to be accurate. The obvious next step is as suggested above, to discover the appeal of the subjective milieu by understanding the benefits of engagement. This requires a flexible approach, the relinquishment of assumptions and the collation of empirical evidence. Contrary to the belief that therapeutic culture is responsible for creating emotional vulnerability and has led to a culture of fear, as Furedi posits, it will be argued that a willingness to embrace vulnerability and to seek help in the resolution of existential difficulties, can be a measure of personal fortitude and autonomy. Indeed, therapeutic discourse may have contributed to that willingness, by

helping to de-stigmatise counselling and psychotherapy. As demonstrated, the vernacular of therapeutics enables a common dialogue to take place regarding emotional life, but it is unlikely that it *creates* stress and trauma, 'the problems are not new and hence not constructed by the therapists' (Andrew Samuels quoted in Hodson, 2004, 411). Samuels makes explicit what is implicit in Furedi's discourse, which as a critique of the culture implicates its clinicians. Indeed, Furedi has previously made his personal bias explicit by describing counselling as 'one of the biggest cons of modern life' and likening counsellors to 'rats' (Hodson, 2004, 409 and 410). Indeed, apart from a perfunctory disclaimer regarding the segregation of clinical practice and therapy culture, made in the introduction to his discourse, the boundaries between the two are, perhaps not accidentally, indistinct (Furedi, 2004, 22).

2.3 The Limitations of Furedi's Enquiry and Beyond

Furedi provides a useful observation of the defining aspects of therapy culture as demonstrated, and the concurrent culture of emotionalism, discussed below. He demonstrates their existence and influence, and this helps to establish the significance of the therapeutic or emotional paradigm within contemporary culture. However, there are limitations concerning the plausibility and validity of aspects of his enquiry and these will now be interrogated.

Furedi demonstrates a limited understanding not only of the ethos of the psychotherapy profession and process, but also of the diversity of individual levels of emotional resilience and competence. For example, he states that the 'promiscuous application of therapeutic diagnosis' made by professionals results in 'every minor tragedy' requiring professional intervention (2004, 19). He then

elucidates this point using the example of bereavement. The implication being that death constitutes a 'minor tragedy'. He consistently demonstrates little empathy for the reality of dealing with emotional difficulty and frequently makes unqualified and prejudicial claims. For example, he states that people with 'ordinary troubles' are now encouraged to seek professional help, and as a consequence of this miss the opportunity to garner personal insight (ibid., 107-108). Two anomalies are identified here. Firstly, his unqualified designation of problems as 'ordinary', which does not take into account the subjectivity of feelings or coping mechanisms. It is based on *his* benchmark of what is ordinary. Secondly, he presumes that seeking professional help is an *alternative* to personal contemplation and the insight it often unearths. This too, is inaccurate. From the perspective of the experienced psychotherapist the therapeutic encounter offers 'space for reflection, insight and the better containment of feelings' (Hodson, 2004, 411-412). Indeed, the exploration of feelings within a bounded environment, often allows personal insight to surface. The therapist is the facilitator of the enquiry, which is inevitably client led. It must be stressed that this form of personal development work is rarely an easy option. It takes courage to face one's fears and it is usually only when the 'ordinary' problem presents an *extraordinary* challenge that is emotionally overwhelming, that professional help is sought.

Furedi criticises the prevalent use of 'the language of psychobabble and victimhood' (quoted in Hodson, 2004, 409). However, it should be noted that the superficial and often incorrect use of much popular psychological terminology is also a cause for concern for therapists. Moreover, the emphasis on victimhood arguably does not stem from the profession, but from the media, which is the

source of much of Furedi's 'cultural' observation. Hodson, therefore, notes that the title of Furedi's book, *Therapy Culture: Cultivating Vulnerability in an Uncertain Age*, is actually an unsuitable and misleading one, which constitutes a statement made by someone with no understanding of the therapeutic process, or the profession's ethics (ibid.). He states that the book more accurately refers to 'Oprah Winfrey culture' and self-help books that offer inadequate solutions to complex emotional problems (ibid.). It is worth noting that the self-help market is indicative of therapy culture and the psychologisation of the self but that it does not necessarily lead to the dependent therapeutic relationship that Furedi is hypothesising. Indeed, it can foster self-reliance, which is the antithesis of the dependent relationship he proposes. This is one of many contradictions and inconsistencies that arise throughout Furedi's discourse.

Despite Furedi's claim that his discourse is concerned with 'therapy as a cultural phenomenon rather than as a clinical technique' he very successfully blurs the boundaries (2004, 22). The discourse on the culture has obviously grown out of the techniques and for this reason it is perhaps not a straightforward task to segregate the two, and with the exception of his brief disclaimer in the introduction, Furedi does not attempt to distinguish the practice from the culture. Indeed, he infers that psychotherapists are proactively seeking to procure clients and to foster co-dependency, by perpetuating the notion of victimhood. His thesis borders on a conspiracy theory and his manipulation of the facts to support his hypothesis is evident in the following passage, which constitutes a misrepresentation of statements made by the psychotherapist Nick Totton (ibid., 9):

The psychotherapist Nick Totton has described counselling training as a “pyramid selling scheme”, which has created a “huge increase in clients”. “The only way to get therapy and counselling paid for...is to get the state and other institutions to pay for it’ (ibid.).

On the surface this is an alarming statement from one of Britain’s foremost psychotherapeutic professionals. However, on inspection of the original text, a different story emerges. In his article, Totton (1999) expresses concern for the tighter regulation of the profession, and also for the lack of parity between supply and demand. He explains that this presents an ethical dilemma that would require the representation of counselling and therapy as a specialist medical field, whereas in fact, ‘those wanting therapy are not *sick*, since unhappiness or a desire to change are not illnesses’ (ibid., 316, original emphasis). Totton is undoubtedly advocating transparency and loyalty to the ethics of his profession, in addition to highlighting that the number of trained professionals outweighs the demand for their services. Earlier in the article Totton clearly uses the example of the ‘pyramid selling scheme’ as a metaphor to illustrate the sustainability issues that the profession faces. It was perhaps an unwise choice of metaphor, but Totton in fact illustrates that demand for counselling and psychotherapy is not high, or certainly not high enough to employ all of the trained professionals. It seems unlikely therefore, that people are motivated to train as counsellors or psychotherapists for financial gain. Perhaps there are other personal and ‘developmental’ motivations involved, which might include helping others attain a better quality of life, or simply

improving one's own emotional intelligence and using these skills in the workplace, as Furedi suggests, below.

Furedi is also accused of providing inaccurate statistical evidence regarding the number of trained counsellors in Britain. Indeed, he claims that there are more counsellors than soldiers in Britain despite the numbers being 30,000 and 116,820 respectively (see Hodson, 2004, 409). He admits that 'exact figures are hard to compile', but states that 'there are around 110,000 individuals working as full-time and part-time counsellors' plus those 'who practise their counselling skills as part of their job' (Furedi, 2004, 206). Hodson, however, a Fellow of the BACP, insists that these figures represent an 80,000-person discrepancy, and therefore undermine the basis of Furedi's argument. The 'growth industry' is apparently not growing at the rate he claims. In addition, Hodson contests Furedi's claim that there are 1,231,000 counselling sessions being facilitated each month in Britain (Hodson, 2004, 411). He does not provide an alternative figure, but he questions the source of this information and in particular, Furedi's declaration that almost half of that figure pertains to "'advice" sessions' stating, 'counsellors by definition do not give advice' (ibid.).

More recently, Alyssa McDonald cites Furedi's thesis, which she describes as 'a bleak but influential analysis' of wellbeing culture (2009, 20). McDonald provides statistical evidence from the British Social Attitudes Survey (BSAS) (2008/2009), which shows that just 16 per cent of the population have visited 'a listening professional' compared to 70 per cent who claim to confide in 'at least three friends or relatives' (ibid.). This is evidence, she claims, that Furedi's argument that personal relationships are suffering due to the invasion of 'an army of counsellors', is untrue (ibid, 21). The statistics within the BACP report

cited above provided a similar picture. It elucidates a widespread openness to seeking professional help, 82 per cent, but showed that the percentage of people who had actually undergone therapy was just 18 per cent. The 2 per cent discrepancy between the two surveys is perhaps negligible, but shows that Furedi's 'prophecy' has not materialised in the intervening years. His claims that dependency upon the counselling profession is leading to a breakdown of social support structures, has in the interim been disproved. Based on the results of the statistical evidence provided by the more recent survey, McDonald concludes that the British population is actually becoming 'friendlier and more emotionally robust' and that this is cause for celebration (ibid, 21).

It is also worth noting that the BSAS (2008/2009) highlighted the prevalence of mental health issues, stating that 40 per cent of people have discussed concerns with their GP (ibid.). This statistic denotes the prevalence of mental health issues, which are usually broadly defined as 'stress-related'. Indeed, according to Jeremy Hunter (2011) commenting on work-related stress, the switch from manufacturing to 'knowledge work' has resulted in the 'prominent emotional tone' shifting from boredom to anxiety. He states that one of the challenges for knowledge workers is the increased demand upon their time and the lack of boundaries between work and 'down time', and that this accounts for a rise in incidences of anxiety. It is therefore more accurate to suggest that the therapeutic culture has arisen out of a need for help that has been generated by an increase in the prevalence of anxiety related disorders, rather than, as Furedi suggests, as a result of 'the grief industry' constantly seeking ways to procure clientele (2004, 36).

Lastly and significantly, the BSAS (2008/2009) survey shows that two-thirds of the population consider that emotional expression is important, and that it is becoming an increasingly common practice. This demonstrates that the therapeutic turn is indicative of a more influential expressive turn, which will now be explored in detail.

2.4 The Expressive Turn.

The Romantic movement of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, is cited as having a deep influence on spirituality and subjective wellbeing culture, particularly the prevalence of expressivism (Vincett and Woodhead, 2010, 332, and Heelas, 2008, 26-27). According to Heelas 'the heart' of spiritualities of life is to be found in '*humanistic expressivism*', a spiritually informed synthesis of expressivism and egalitarianism indicative of the Romantic ethos (ibid., 30, author's emphasis). The core values of Romanticism are cited as creativity, and the therapeutic task of accessing and expressing the authentic self (ibid.). During the Romantic era the arts ceased to be primarily representational, they gained in complexity and became a reflection of the inner, emotional life, an explicit form of self-expression that constituted an extension of the self, expressed from the depths of the heart (ibid.). The arts became a therapeutic vessel for personal meaning making. Written, visual and auditory forms of creativity from this period were used to mediate subjective and collective emotion, and self-expression represented a subjective and necessarily emotional interpretation of life.

Charles Taylor provides a philosophical account of the expressivist turn that makes explicit the pivotal role of 'feelings' and 'creative imagination' (1989,

368, 379). Romanticism was a major catalyst for change but there were other influences including many philosophical contributions from both Britain and Germany. In addition to Wordsworth and the Romantic poets, Goethe and Hegel are cited as enlivening the turn. Romanticism was a rebellious 'rejection of classic order' and the search for objective truths in the external world, which was superseded by the search for truth within, in the form of 'an inner voice or impulse', found specifically in the feelings (ibid., 368-369).

The creative imagination, as opposed to the 'reproductive imagination' was key to expressivistic forms of art that no longer simply 'reproduced' what was evident in the external world. The creative imagination is described as a 'power which we have to attribute to ourselves' (ibid., 379). It is intrapersonal and enables the articulation of subjective emotional states in symbolic form, using music, the visual arts, and writing, particularly poetry. Artworks became a means of mediating the intangible, both the emotional and the spiritual, and the artist was akin to the 'priest' overtly mediating the spiritual realm for the sake of self and other (ibid., 378).

The connection between the search for the authentic self, artistic creativity, and self-actualisation is made explicit in the following statement, 'I discover myself through my work as an artist...through this alone I become what I have it in me to be' (Taylor, 1991, 62). Just as art involves the creative imagination, so too does self-discovery (ibid., 63). Creativity and living an authentic life are commensurate with the therapeutic process of self-development, and all depend upon self-expression. The expressive, *emotional* core of the self is revealed in expressivistic creativity and in spirituality as it is 'lived'.

The 'expressive revolution' of the 1960s, originally defined by Talcott Parsons, cites the counterculture as the 'transformation point' which initiated revolutionary ways of living, that became cultural norms a decade later (Martin, 1981, 15). The 1960s saw the constant redefinition of authoritarian boundaries, a rally against hierarchical structure, and the search for personal freedom, authenticity, and freedom of expression. "'Expressive" needs' are defined, that constitute 'an ideology of self-fulfilment, spontaneity and experiential richness' which place emphasis upon the expression of the self and the significance of experience (ibid., 16, 18). With its focus upon humanistic and expressive values, the counterculture was the natural successor of the individualism instigated by the Romantics.

With reference to North America, the 'expressive revolution' has been identified as resulting in the psychologisation of everyday life, and this argument is supported with statistics that show the American population is increasingly turning to what is described as 'psychological wisdom' as a method of meaning making (Rice, 1998, 26-28). This move is accredited to the 'liberation psychotherapy' of the 1960s, which is connected to self-actualisation and its ethics, and it is defined by 'self-direction and self-expression' (ibid., 11, 29). It is associated with 'liberating the self' from the constrictions of conformity to an outer authority, and the subsequent turn to the authority and the inner expressive element of the self. As such, it is intimately entwined with the spiritual aspects of the turn to the self, identified in Chapter 1. It is claimed that conformity to social expectation in preference to inner wisdom, borders on 'self-violation' and is tantamount to being 'psychologically sick' (ibid., 29). It is clear from this, that the therapeutic imperative is concerned with more than 'just'

recovery from illness. It is connected to the ideal of human flourishing, and the search for 'inner wisdom' as an expression of the self.

Reflecting the Humanistic 'person-centred' philosophical standpoint, which embraces the ethic of self-actualisation, Carl Rogers provides a summary of the expressive, 'utterly revolutionized world of tomorrow' and the 'person of tomorrow' who will inhabit it (1980, 350). These people embody many of the defining characteristics of the holistic milieu, which is clearly commensurate with the principles of the expressive turn. The characteristics include: openness to new experiences and understanding of both the psychospiritual and social world; a need to engage in authentic communication and a coterminous rejection of deceit; a 'healthy' scepticism regarding science, condoning scientific enquiry that is essentially life-enhancing and eschewing that which is not; living beyond dichotomy and dualism, embracing the holistic lifestyle; seeking community and an intimacy that includes emotional and intellectual understanding; an openness and understanding of the self as a process of change and a concomitant willingness to take risks; non-judgmental compassion and caring of those in genuine need; a heartfelt desire to commune with nature; a rejection of hierarchical, rigid, institutional structure; compliance with, and trust of inner authority; not striving for material wealth; seeking spiritual solace from within, and discovering meaning and purpose that extends beyond individual goals. (ibid., 350-352). From this, not only is the holistic nature of the expressive turn to the self evident, it also demonstrates the inadequacies of the 'narcissism myth' perpetuated by Furedi, Lasch, and Rieff. It delineates and reinforces the ethics of the psychospiritual milieu, and makes explicit the significant relationships between self and other that can result from therapeutic development. It

reinforces the social constructionist principle that the individual is affected by, and has an effect on, society.

2.5 Heart and Mind: Emotion and Reason

Furedi acknowledges an expressivist turn in Britain, which, he says began with the inception of therapy culture and the 'therapeutic turn' of the 1980s (2004, 195). Like the expressivist turn, this too was heralded by a shift from the 'life of the mind' to the 'life of the heart', in particular the celebration of 'public emoting as evidence of a more intelligent and sensitive society (ibid., 30). Just as the Romantic notion of expressivism represented a rebellion against the authority of its day, the emotional turn and therapy culture in particular, is described as an 'anti-intellectual' rebellion (ibid., 159). Thus, therapy culture is seen as a type of hegemony that undermines the authority of the individual and perpetuates fear by establishing a common belief in personal 'emotional deficit' (ibid., 26). As explained above, the Romantics championed the primacy of the emotions and this was synonymous with a rebellion at that time. To some extent the current 'culture of emotionalism', which Furedi says began in America in the 1970s, is a second wave of anti-authoritarian rebellion (2004, 26). However, to say that subjectivisation and the concomitant emotional culture equates with an anti-intellectual stance, is perhaps too simplistic. Ideally, the two co-exist. Rather than emotion usurping the intellect, it contributes another dimension to reason that results in a more nuanced observation or analysis of lived experience.

Furedi's comment is indicative of a schism that exists between reason and emotion, one that is largely attributed to the prioritisation of the positivist paradigm, which has been evident since the Enlightenment (Riis and Woodhead,

2010, 14). The commonly held perception is that reason is trustworthy and, consequently, emotion is irrational and, therefore, untrustworthy and to some extent, inconsequential. Historically, this attitude has often resulted in the emotional account being rendered inferior due to its subjective nature, whereas, more accurately both intellect and emotion share a symbiotic relationship and have comparable value. Indeed, both are essential components of the decision making process (ibid., 15).

'New', or 'rational' Romanticism is an amalgam of emotion and reason. The '*emotions are judgments*' described as the 'life force of the soul' (Solomon, 1993, 15, original emphasis). They represent the values that an individual esteems. Indeed, it is the emotions or 'passions' that provide life with meaning (ibid., 54). The connection between the emotions and subjectivity lies in the interpretation of the emotional tone of lived experience, it is the outcome of emotional processing, substantiated by subjective values (ibid., 19). Emotion is often equated with a lack of rationality, as a form of independent 'will' (see Riis and Woodhead, 2010, 2-5, 63-65, 199). When interpreted in this way, emotion can be used as a 'scapegoat'. An excuse to absolve one's self of responsibility for challenging states of mind and behaviour. This comes from a belief in the emotions as primordial responses of the 'id' rather than rational responses of the self or ego (Solomon, 1993, xvi). However, the Buddhist teacher Thich Nhat Hanh states unequivocally, 'our anger is our very self' (1995, 58). The emotions are not other than the self. They are central to experience, a self-crafted product of life and therefore personal responsibility for them is requisite. The emotions are instrumental in constructing the self and the social world (Solomon, 1993, xvii). Consequently, subjectivity concerning the emotions is defined as

'intersubjectivity', because the emotional experience necessarily involves others (ibid., 20, original emphasis). Emotion creates life experience through both intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships (ibid. 15).

Deborah Lupton's (1998) thesis on the 'emotional self' provides a historical overview, a confluence of the factors already mentioned with reference to the expressive turn. The Romantic period is defined as a 'cult of refined emotionalism' and the spiritual nature of the emotions, which are concerned with subjective meaning and value systems, is delineated (ibid., 82). The emotions and authenticity are also intimately connected. The expression of the authentic self is concerned with subjective 'truth', which is naturally, emotion-laden. 'Emotional states are understood as a means of gaining an insight into the "true" self, for in their very "naturalness" they are perceived as "breaking through" the bonds of "culture"' (ibid., 89). Emotion is potent because it is an authentic expression of the self that transcends cultural conformity. This understanding is the antithesis of Furedi's interpretation of an *emotionally* determined 'therapy culture', which he says conditions people to believe they are impotent. The therapeutic effects of emotional development are acknowledged, in particular the significance of personal 'reflexive work' is recognised, as part of the effective management, adjustment, and expression of emotional states (ibid., 92). The psychosomatic connection and the detrimental effects exerted upon the immune system, through the repression of emotion, is also acknowledged (ibid., 100). The emotions play an essential role in the holistic approach to health and healing. They determine health, because dis-ease is viewed as psychosomatic (see Louise Hay, 1989).

The influence of Humanistic Psychology with its emphasis on personal development, and the 'language of self actualization and self-acceptance' in particular, is also cited as being instrumental in shaping the expressive cultural landscape (ibid., 93). So too, is Daniel Goleman's (1996) thesis on 'emotional intelligence', which emphasises the development of self-awareness in order to improve intrapersonal and interpersonal understanding and communication. 'Goleman's thesis...emphasizes the importance of "emotional literacy" for both men and women, involving working upon the self in relation to the emotions and learning ways of identifying emotions in oneself and in others and of managing one's emotions appropriately to achieve social success' (Lupton, 1998, 93). It is evident that there is a spectrum upon which emotional development operates, from dis-ease to self-actualisation, the latter being commensurate with wellbeing (see Chapter 3). It is also becoming increasingly evident that emotional culture is not concerned solely with the self. Human beings live mostly in community with others and therefore emotional development of the self is to some extent determined by, and impacts upon, others.

As adumbrated above, Daniel Goleman (1996) has been instrumental in shaping the emotional cultural landscape, with his popular thesis on emotional intelligence, which draws upon the work of Peter Salovey and John Mayer (1990). This seminal work has been applied in the workplace, with subsequent publications aimed specifically at this market and leadership development in particular (Goleman, 1999; Goleman, Boyatzis and McKee, 2002). Essentially, self-awareness is paramount for the improvement of emotional intelligence, which requires a combination of '*metacognition*', that is, awareness of ones thoughts, and '*metamood*', awareness of one's moods (Goleman, 1996, 46,

original emphases). In the context of emotional intelligence, self-awareness is indistinguishable from mindfulness '*self-awareness* refers to a self-reflexive, introspective attention to one's own experience, sometimes called *mindfulness*' (ibid., 315, original emphases). Expounding the principles of the turn to the self and mindfulness, Goleman states that emotionally intelligent people 'are autonomous and sure of their own boundaries, are in good psychological health, and tend to have a positive outlook on life. When they get in a bad mood, they don't ruminate and obsess...In short their *mindfulness* helps them to manage their emotions' (ibid., 48, my emphasis). It is evident that mindfulness constitutes an efficient method of emotional development and that emotional development is fundamental to the 'therapeutic' paradigm.

The emotional effects of therapy culture will now be investigated through an interrogation of Furedi's thesis on emotionalism, and using evidence compiled through an investigation of popular culture.

2.6 Emotional Culture

As demonstrated above, Furedi overtly criticises the therapeutic culture that has arisen as a result of the casual use of psychological terminology, particularly in the media. Through this, he undermines, either consciously or subliminally, the practice of psychotherapy itself. His argument gathers momentum under the rubric of 'the culture of emotionalism', which he says exhibits an unprecedented degree of emotionality (Furedi, 2004, 24-43). The view that the open expression of emotion is life-enhancing is contested and he posits that it is not necessarily indicative of a society that is more enlightened than the pre-countercultural

1950s. This argument will now be used to exemplify the extent of the cultural shift towards, not only a tolerance of, but a desire for, the common and blatant expression of emotion. This will be achieved through an exploration of his argument regarding emotional determinism, the prevalence of expressivity in society, and emotional intelligence as it relates to the authentic self.

2.6.1 Emotional Determinism.

Furedi postulates that the turn to the self and therapy culture is commensurate with a rudimentary 'emotional determinism' that attributes the cause of the majority of social issues to the breakdown and mismanagement of personal emotions (ibid., 27). Pivotal to this theory of emotional determinism is an affiliation with the notions of 'emotional wounding', the 'wounded self' and the concomitant vulnerability that is said to influence the individual from the moment of conception (ibid., 28-29). To explicate, emotional wounding unlike physical wounding has no tangible qualities or boundaries. However, it has potentially long-term effects on the individual psyche and as such, it contributes to the development of a 'wounded self' that Furedi equates with low self-esteem (ibid., 29). He considers the notion that violent and other forms of pathological behaviour are passed on to successive generations, to be a 'cultural myth' and states that emotional 'trauma' that results from myriad forms of abuse, is now used as a way of making sense of disruptive behaviour (ibid.). Indeed, he implies that it is used as an *excuse* for such behaviour, rather than as a method of gaining insight and understanding to explain, rather than justify or condone, antisocial and criminal behaviour. This argument is illustrated using a range of examples. The most extreme is a psychological profile of Saddam Hussein, who was

previously portrayed as “the wounded self” by political psychologist Jerrold Post, who states that Hussein’s pathology stemmed from the “womb”, and his mother’s attempts at suicide and abortion, which resulted in Hussein’s “wounded...self-esteem” (ibid., 28). This is obviously expressed by Post in an attempt to comprehend the dictator’s tyrannical behaviour. However, as can frequently be detected, there is more than a hint of cynicism from Furedi, who derides the psychological stance, which in turn undermines the specialist’s interpretation. Despite the tone of his enquiry, Furedi succeeds in providing evidence of the psychological ethos and the work undertaken by psychologists to comprehend the behaviour that results in human suffering.

He seems angered not only by the use of emotion as a method of meaning making, but also by what he views as the flagrant display of emotion, including the use of emotive vocabulary. Issue is taken with the emotional culture that has replaced traditional British stoicism, and this is illustrated using the example of media news coverage, which has shifted incrementally from the *factual* to the *emotive* account. A comparison is made using two accounts of flooding in Britain, both of which resulted in the loss of lives. Explicitly, following the loss of 164 lives in 1953 due to flooding he states ‘there was none of the emoting that one associates with the media coverage of contemporary disasters’ (2002, 17). This is contrasted with a significantly more emotive reporting approach taken in 2000, when ‘just’ four lives were lost. His criticism of the changes in reporting style demonstrate insensitivity, and a lack of empathy and understanding of the psychological effects that are an inherent aspect of other forms of human suffering. It connotes denial of the emotional self and its consequences, rather than providing robust evidence of the benefits of *not* attending to the emotional

self. However, the fundamental relationship that exists between the self and the emotions is identified, and it is confirmed that people make sense of the self in emotional terms, which in turn determines their behaviour (ibid.). Significantly, Furedi acknowledges that therapy culture is a 'culture of emotionalism', that values "“emotional literacy”, “emotional openness”, “getting in touch with yourself” [and] “expressing yourself”" (2004, 33). Whilst this provides a succinct appraisal of the emotional milieu, he denigrates this shift as indicative of a society that prioritises the emotional or subjective aspects of life *in preference to* the social, as though the two cannot enjoy equal status and comfortably co-exist. He undoubtedly laments traditional British stoicism, which has been largely replaced by a more humane approach to comprehending the human condition.

Although his understanding is arguably somewhat archaic, Furedi provides valuable evidence of the cultural transition that has taken place concerning the self, therapy culture, and the concurrent culture of emotionalism. Paradoxically, through his denial of the importance of the psychological and specifically the emotional methods of meaning making, he reinforces their centrality to understanding of the human experience. In addition, his argument concerning emotionality signifies the emotions as common to the therapeutic and spiritual paradigms, and unifies them under the rubric of 'emotional culture', thus reinforcing their significance. Parallels with the 'spiritual' themes of the holistic milieu, such as 'getting in touch with oneself' and 'expressing oneself', are clearly emotionally oriented.

2.6.2 *The Prevalence of Expressivity.*

Furedi states that there is a 'contemporary pressure to feel in public' which is indicative of the 'confessional' nature of emotional culture, and the imperative to be emotionally open, this he says has resulted in the erosion of the 'private' world (ibid., 39, 40). This is a view shared by Wendy Kaminer who states, 'popular therapies have demonized silence and stoicism', as a result secrecy is now considered 'toxic' and 'privacy is pathologized' (2000, 41). She shares Furedi's view that the 'talking cures' have led to *unnecessary* public emoting, but states that this is indicative of a culture defined by voyeurism and exhibitionism, and the ascendancy of reality television, in particular. She explains that this form of voyeurism appeals to humanity's 'baser instincts' and a proclivity for 'gossip' (ibid.). This is synonymous with what Furedi describes as 'self-disclosure television', which he says amounts to the 'mass transmission of streams of emotion' witnessed in programmes hosted by people such as Oprah Winfrey and Jeremy Kyle (2004, 40). In a similar vein, Furedi associates the growth of the often confessional, literary genre of 'celebrity autobiography' with the proliferation of confessional culture and the therapeutic ethos, and this too, may be partially linked with satisfying the 'baser instincts' emphasised by Kaminer. However, it could simply be that reading about common emotional experience is itself therapeutic. Psychotherapy may be at the epicentre of therapeutic dialogue as Furedi suggests, but as Kaminer explains, the reality is complex. Whilst the destigmatisation of psychological, essentially emotional discourse, may have contributed to this in some way, it is not categorically a detrimental trend. The confessional is no doubt cathartic. It absolves 'sin' and in its wake it often invokes empathy through common experience. It may therefore be that what is sought through disclosure is absolution, or simply understanding and acceptance

on the part of the 'celebrity', and for the 'voyeur' reassurance that the difficulties they experience in life are universal. This may well be motivated by connection, and relating to others, rather than judging and condemning. Either way, there are boundaries that can be erected around one's private life, the demarcation of which is a personal choice. There are many variables to be considered, and a plausible argument that Kaminer raises is that public declarations of private life are also a means of validating the self, a case of 'I *tweet* therefore I am'. The popularity of 'virtual expressivity', for example *Twitter*, *Facebook* and 'blogging' in general, is surely testament to the compulsion for self-expression. Whatever the motivation for the public expression of emotion, it is evident that there is not only a supply, but also a demand. Emotional expression speaks to us of the innate difficulties and joys, of the common human condition. It enables us to relate meaningfully with one another.

As established, there has been a noticeable increase in the emphasis placed upon the emotional aspects of contemporary life, within British culture. Indeed, emotional discourse and experience is increasingly the focus of the media. This can be witnessed in popular culture, particularly in television shows that demonstrate the ability to overcome adversity in order to achieve human potential, thus neatly demonstrating both ends of the developmental spectrum. An example of this is *Harry's Arctic Heroes* (2011), which documented the Arctic expedition undertaken by ex-military personnel who had lost limbs in combat, and who were supported on their 'journey', both emotional and physical, by Prince Harry. Programmes such as this, appeal on many levels. They demonstrate emotional resolve, the physical capabilities of the body, and the human propensity to overcome extraordinary challenges. They procure a range

of emotion in the viewer, who may experience awe, admiration, inspiration, gratitude and empathy. No doubt the popularity of such programmes is not 'in spite of', but 'because of' their power to move the viewer emotionally. As humans we crave emotional experience.

Emotion has always been an important constituent of 'entertainment' of course. The viewer identifies with the emotions of those on the stage or screen, as in the popular soap operas, with their portrayal of 'everyday' life and people. However, a shift to the portrayal of 'real-life' emotion has in recent years subordinated the acted version. Indicative of this shift is the rise in the number of televised 'reality' shows of a 'confessional' or 'voyeuristic' nature that confront the viewer with 'genuine' emotion. In addition, programmes such as ITV's *X-Factor*, the epitome of emoting television, overtly exploit the emotional aspects of their contestant's 'journey' from undiscovered talent to 'celebrity'. The programme documents the emotional highs and lows of the contestants because emotion sells, and it is lucrative because it connects people at a subliminal level. Indeed, the music might be redundant if it was not for the fact that it too, is highly emotive. Of course, the emotions are a common, but by no means an innovative way of manipulating an audience. Goethe acknowledges this in *Faust* (1808, lines 178-181):

Arouse their feelings for them, and reveal
Their own emotions – that's what will appeal.
They're young enough to move to tears or laughter,
Excitement and illusion's what they're after.

In contemporary culture, however, a combination of the advancement in psychological knowledge, the sophistication of technology and a global capitalist imperative, has enabled emotional exploitation in the extreme. Emotionalism has become a marketing technique, applied explicitly and tacitly. An example of this is the strap line that accompanies the trademark of Hallmark cards, which reads *'open up with Hallmark cards'*. It constitutes a clear emotional metaphor that says, this card will have a beneficial effect. It speaks of what is implicitly understood, that it is 'good to talk', to dialogue and connect on an emotional, and therefore more 'authentic' level. These examples are testament to the significance of emotionalism.

As Furedi contends, emotion is not only expressed more freely, it is also referenced more explicitly than in the past. Phil Vickery an ex-England rugby player, commentating on the contest between England and Scotland during the Rugby World Cup, quoted Scotland's head coach Andy Robinson as having said 'rugby is an emotional game' (2011). Sport, like music, provides a crucible for the expression of emotion, amongst contestants and spectators alike. The overt expression of deep emotion was witnessed in the same rugby match when an early substitution was made due to injury. The two players involved, exchanged a long and meaningful embrace that was evidently highly emotionally charged, as the substitution was made. There are two points to be made here. Firstly, that 'even' rugby, a game of extreme physicality and machismo is essentially an emotional experience, and secondly, that this is understood and openly acknowledged. Emotion is simply unavoidable, despite attempts to suppress it, because it is the core of being human. It is 'life itself'.

All of these examples provide evidence of the 'important shift in values' to an emotional culture that has taken place (Furedi, 2004, 38). In confirmation of this, the example of Princess Diana's death in 1997 is used to demonstrate that the public display of emotion is not only commonplace, but that it is expected because it constitutes 'normal' behaviour. Indeed, *absence* of emotional expression on the part of the monarchy in response to the death was deemed inappropriate, and the monarchy was further castigated by the media for aloofness, and even accused of 'child abuse' regarding the emotional mismanagement of the Princes, William and Harry (ibid.). This furore is indicative of the understanding that it is human to experience and *demonstrate* emotion, and that it is unhealthy to suppress it. Indeed, it is 'OK to ask for help', "THE STIFF UPPER LIP WENT OUT IN THE FORTIES", as this declaration made by the University of London to publicise its student help-line emphasises (ibid., original emphasis). These views seem to be abhorrent to Furedi, who believes that the public declaration of emotion is not only ubiquitous, but that it has also acquired 'the status of a religious doctrine' (ibid.). As suggested by Hodson below, this is perhaps telling of Furedi's personal discomfort, which it transpires is not just with therapy culture, but with the open expression of emotion also.

As demonstrated, times have changed irrevocably since the 1940s. Indeed, it is now common to witness the words 'love you' being spoken unselfconsciously at the end of telephone calls that are made in public. Male friends and relatives are seen to embrace, even kiss one another, publicly. The culture of emotionalism is truly embedded in British society. We have become less self-conscious and perhaps more 'European', and it seems reasonable to speculate that this trend is unlikely to revert to the 'stiff upper lip' era that

Furedi seems to lament. It is as though for him, emotional expression encumbers human experience and therapy threatens it, or threatens him. His argument is distinctly subjective, supported by little empirical evidence that stands up to close scrutiny and this unfortunately, detracts from the credence of his thesis. As Phillip Hodson questions, 'does Furedi fear disclosure as a psychic, almost visceral threat? Is his position technically "paranoid"? Would it be reasonable to conjecture that *one* underlying motive for writing his book is "to make the world safe for Frank Furedi"?' (2004, 410).

2.6.3 Emotional Intelligence, Society, and the Authentic Self.

As discussed, Furedi claims that the current culture of emotionalism is indicative of a narrow emotional determinism. He claims that emotional intelligence advocates view emotional illiteracy, that is, the mismanagement and inability to process emotion, as the root not only of individual, but also social problems. Also that emotional culture does not encourage or even allow the expression of the full range of emotions. Rather, it seeks to contain and manage certain emotions such as anger, attachment, and guilt, and glorify others, particularly contentment, which he says has come to define wellbeing (ibid, 30-31).

Furedi acknowledges that emotional culture seeks understanding and meaning through an inner, emotional lens, rather than an outer 'social' lens. He also acknowledges the importance of self-understanding, not as an end in itself, but rather as a means of understanding the social milieu (ibid., 38). He makes reference to the theory of emotional intelligence, in particular the importance it attaches to self-awareness and taking responsibility for subjective emotions (ibid., 27). He says 'to know oneself is an important quality associated with

maturity and conscious reflection', but states that the increase in therapeutic intervention has not resulted in an increase in self-knowledge (ibid., 38). It is unclear what he is basing this judgment upon, but it is perhaps a reference to philosophical knowledge of the 'self' *per se*, rather than the subjective insight that comes from emotional literacy. The statement is recognition of the importance of emotional literacy and of taking time out from routine for reflexivity. However, it comes with a proviso: it does 'not mean worshipping or becoming obsessed with [emotions or feelings]' (ibid.). He claims that explicitly searching for 'the real self' can obfuscate, and does not ensure self-understanding (ibid.). He affirms the notion of the authentic self and highlights its pivotal position in the quest for emotional transparency, and posits that there has been a non-conformist lobby against economic and social imperatives, which prioritises 'the authenticity of the real self' (ibid.). As evidence regarding the subjective turn stipulates, an anti-establishment ethos prevails, but this is not necessarily commensurate with the disavowal of 'socially acceptable forms of human behaviour' as Furedi suggests (ibid.). It is surely possible to simultaneously honour individuality *and* community, because self-understanding increases the propensity to understand others and vice versa. The relationship can be one of total symbiosis. Indeed, improved intrapersonal communication has the ability to unite people because it fosters empathic understanding (Cooper, 2008, 106-110).

Citing the work of Arlie Hochschild (1983), Furedi provides a credible argument regarding the centrality of the authentic self to emotional culture (2004, 38-39). He reasons that a search for the authentic self is inevitable because social life and individuation 'constantly throw up questions like "who

am I?" and "where do I belong?" (ibid., 39). The search for the authentic self is synonymous with the fundamental and timeless search for personal identity, and 'feeling', which is a means of understanding how experience relates to one's self, is central to that process. Physical feelings are indications or signs that can be interpreted. Feelings enable one to make sense of emotion, and as such, increased somatic awareness becomes the primary method of mediating emotion. Furedi expresses concern that subjective feelings then become the ultimate authority and mediator of experience, a point that to some extent contradicts his argument that therapy culture disenfranchises the individual. He claims, perhaps rightly, that living with uncertainty has resulted in seeking comfort in the notion of an inherently existent and constant 'true self' hence the quest for authenticity (ibid., 39). He concludes that the 'classical' quest for authenticity is distinct from the therapeutic quest, and that the distinguishing feature is the public expression of emotion (ibid.).

Furedi claims that emotional culture with its accent on emotional literacy, is not driven by rebellion like the countercultural turn of the 1960s, but by conformity (ibid., 39). It represents a type of hegemony that relies upon potentially destructive emotions being suppressed rather than expressed, by instructing people to become more emotionally literate, and dictating what it is permissible to feel. As mentioned above, he says that emotions 'in general' are not welcomed, that only 'positive' emotion is acceptable, and a primary concern of emotional literacy is recognising and transforming the negative into a positive. His interpretation is understandable to a point, but he takes a leap too far. As discussed, a prerequisite of emotional intelligence is self-awareness, which enables recognition of emotion and behaviour, and fosters a concomitant

awareness that one has choice. Indeed, with practice it is possible to 'respond' consciously, rather than 'react' unconsciously. Awareness enables choices that support self and others. Ultimately this awareness can be used to avoid unnecessary personal suffering. The issue is not therefore a question of 'emotional correctness' and conformity (Furedi, 2004, 200). It is a more pragmatic one of self-management and the improvement of quality of life because it will have a 'positive impact' upon self and other. The application of mindfulness as a form of emotional development addresses the issue raised by Furedi, which is not completely unfounded. Mindfulness is concerned with the acknowledgement and expression of a full range of emotions and therefore ensures that feelings are not negated or suppressed, it brings awareness to feelings, both 'good' and 'bad', but provides an alternative way of expressing emotions that may be damaging to self and others. It is important to recognise that there is always a choice, for example, to express anger and suffer the consequences, or concentrate on mindful breathing. Mindfulness is not 'positive thinking', however it can result in a positive perception, through the practise of non-judgment and acceptance.

The evidence demonstrates that British culture has become acutely expressive, and that subjective wellbeing culture, therapeutic culture and the holistic spiritual milieu, are all indicative of what can be broadly defined as 'emotional culture'. Indeed, this is probably a more accurate classification than the term 'therapy culture'. Furedi succeeds in elucidating the pivotal role that emotion occupies in contemporary culture but does not however, provide conclusive evidence to show that 'therapeutic culture has helped construct a diminished sense of self that characteristically suffers from an emotional deficit

and possesses a permanent consciousness of vulnerability' (ibid., 21). As this thesis asserts through the empirical research, emotional development can enable wellbeing by improving intrapersonal and interpersonal communication, through the application of mindfulness, impacting positively upon self-esteem in the process. Indeed, Furedi's interpretation of vulnerability is negatively associated, whereas in practice, acknowledging and working with vulnerability is not necessarily pathological, and can in fact be the starting point for self-actualisation.

2.7 Valuing Vulnerability.

Furedi argues that therapy culture unwittingly, or even consciously, creates and perpetuates a belief in the vulnerability of the self, which undermines belief in self-efficacy. Indeed, he states that therapy culture 'valorises the help-seeking self' and he equates this with a lack of autonomy (2004, 107). In addition, there is an implicit assumption in his argument that vulnerability is inherently destructive, a detrimental state, a signifier of victimhood and incapacity, and nothing more. He equates an emphasis upon vulnerability with 'the ideals of self-determination and of resilience assum[ing] a marginal role' (ibid., 115). This stance indicates a limited understanding, not only of psychotherapy, but also of what it means to 'be vulnerable'. It speaks of ill-founded value judgment and in particular, does not account for the nuanced experiences of being vulnerable, and the therapeutic opportunity that provides for personal development, emotional healing, and greater wellbeing. In reality, the acknowledgment of emotional vulnerability is often the prequel to the search for answers to perplexing existential questions, a process that can be facilitated either by a

therapist or through the use of 'self-help' methodologies. Either way, it represents the beginning of the therapeutic process, which often leads to emotional competence and therefore greater wellbeing.

Given this understanding, vulnerability is seen as commensurate with being human, and psychotherapy as a process that facilitates the emotional space necessary to explore and identify the self, and improve the intrapersonal relationship (Todres, 2007, 3). That relationship is fostered through the application of mindfulness, used explicitly or tacitly, and by allowing the full range of emotions and the authentic self to emerge simultaneously. Indeed,

The healthy real self provides for the experience of emotions both good and bad, pleasant and unpleasant. These are a necessary and fundamental part of life, and the real self does not erect barriers against these feelings or go into hiding. It accepts the wide range of feelings and is not afraid to express them (Masterson, 1988, 43).

Psychotherapy provides an opportunity for the authentic self to surface and be verbally expressed. The willingness to undergo a psychotherapeutic process signifies the willingness and courage to 'risk' being vulnerable. It is an applied mindfulness practice that allows the participants to engage fully and optimistically with the emotions that arise, in an attempt to resolve the destructive habitual behaviour they have unconsciously created. The process beckons the unconscious, into consciousness.

The notion of 'emotional wounding' raised by Furedi above in relation to Saddam Hussein, is connected with the word 'vulnerability', which is derived

from the Latin *vulnerabilis*, meaning 'wounding'. Vulnerability can be understood in metaphorical terms as a 'wound', itself a paradox that encompasses both challenging and enlightening potential, initially intrapersonally and ultimately interpersonally. Thus, vulnerability is described as 'an existential given', and the wound, which represents human imperfection as a 'gift' (Todres, 2007, 150). Indeed, 'the wound is the place where the light gets in' (Rumi quoted in Valentini, 2009, 63). Specifically, when personal vulnerability and the emotion that invokes are respected and valued, rather than marginalised, they can become the catalyst for emotional wellbeing. For example, 'the more fully we can embrace unhappiness, the deeper and more abiding our sense of well-being' (Germer, 2005, 24). By facing the emotions communicated through vulnerability, it is possible to ameliorate the self, through the conscious improvement of emotional awareness and emotional resilience.

With mindfulness it is possible to improve self-awareness, which is central to the process of change, and embrace the full spectrum of emotion that is requisite for the experience of wellbeing (see Delmonte, 1990). Self-awareness is necessary in order to recognise emotional responses to stimuli, and when it is combined with mindfulness it provides a beneficial process of recognising, accepting, allowing, and finally embracing the vulnerability, which is essentially emotional in nature. Mindfulness is acknowledged as an essential, yet often tacit, component of psychotherapeutic practice, as it represents the quality of attention brought to the successful therapeutic alliance (Germer, 2005, 18). Through the application of mindfulness it is possible to foster self-awareness, to recognise and develop a sense of ease with vulnerability. To fully experience being vulnerable and therefore value its therapeutic potential. By exploring and

accepting vulnerability within the boundaries of the therapeutic space it becomes possible to identify and re-define the self, to heal the emotional wounds that inevitably arise in response to lived experience. When interpreted in this way, the wound of vulnerability assumes transformative status and the therapist, far from creating further insecurity, nurtures emotional 'enlightenment'.

2.7.1 Distinguishing Therapy from the Therapeutic

Although Furedi uses the terms interchangeably, it is useful to make a distinction between the words therapy and therapeutic. They share common etymology, being derived from the Greek *therapeúein* meaning 'to cure or treat', and the Latin *therapeuticus*, which means to 'cure or heal', however the perception of each, is often distinct. For example, to state that someone requires, or would benefit from entering into *therapy*, implies a more acute emotional condition than stating that they would benefit from an activity that is *therapeutic*. 'Therapy' often has negative connotations and implies illness, whereas the opposite is true for the term 'therapeutic', which implies wellbeing.

To elucidate, therapy is commonly understood to symbolise various forms of psychotherapy, whereas the term therapeutic is often more broadly applied. Therapy has associations with remedial treatments, and is especially connected with psychological suffering, whereas the term therapeutic, especially when used in adjectival form is commonly understood as a salutary experience that pertains to holistic health. The word therapeutic is synonymous with 'healing', which is connected etymologically to 'wholeness'. Healing has spiritual as well as psychosomatic associations, it is more than simply the recovery from illness and as such it is commensurate with 'psychospiritual' wellbeing.

Furedi's initial paper on the subject published in 2002 used the term 'therapeutic culture', whereas the 2004 publication used the term 'therapy culture'. The former also implies that the culture itself is therapeutic, which is opposed to the message he is intent on conveying. However, it may be that the culture itself *is* therapeutic, in that people feel more able to express themselves emotionally and this is inherently beneficial. As previously demonstrated, emotion is an unavoidable aspect of the human condition and its open expression in myriad contexts, is increasingly becoming the norm.

Having established the commonality and difference, these initial explorations will now be explicated within the context of the 'facilitated space' in order to establish how the provision of such space, which is both internal and external to the self, can be therapeutic.

2.8 Facilitated Space: A Therapeutic Space

Through its propensity for emotional healing, the therapeutic space can be the catalyst for subjective wellbeing. As elucidated above, it also has the potential, when entered into with a willingness for vulnerability and authenticity, to be a generative space that enables personal creativity and human flourishing. The 'facilitated space' is geographic, temporal, affective, expressive and creative, and as such, it is therapeutic. It is simultaneously internal and external to the self and as such it is necessarily concerned with the emotional development of the participants. Essentially, it constitutes a 'retreat' from routine and provides the opportunity for personal growth through self-reflection. The 'therapeutic space' is a generative space for wellbeing and it can be facilitated equally within a

psychological or spiritual context, because essentially, as elucidated below, it is 'psycho-spiritual'.

Psychotherapy is 'a deeply personal spiritual journey', that enables access to the repressed psycho-spiritual self, through cognitive processing (Schermer, 2003, 38). The process of psychotherapy is synonymous with meditation which requires a stilling of the mind, and the therapist is akin to 'a modern-day mystic' who insightfully interprets the client's spoken and unspoken cues (ibid., 216). The therapist becomes the mediator of information and experience, which is non-conscious within the client, by engaging in 'therapeutic listening' and by creating a sacred quasi-religious space or atmosphere (ibid., 217). Ideally, the client brings their authentic self and a willingness to experience vulnerability to that space, which has been likened to a 'sanctuary' or 'altar' (ibid.). The religious metaphors extend from both the unconditional and ritualised nature of the encounter. Essentially, the therapeutic space is an arena for the practice of applied mindfulness, which is engaged in by the therapist and the client alike. Ideally, there is an exchange of mindful speech and mindful listening undertaken, the quality of which is rarely encountered outside of the therapeutic exchange.

The therapeutic space is a 'soulful space', in a spiritual or emotional sense, one that is *heart felt* and allows deep sentiment to be felt and expressed (Todres, 2007, 152). The 'soulful space is the mixing of vulnerability and the kind of freedom that embodies a willingness to "wear" and "move" within the vulnerabilities of this human realm' (ibid., 162). Within the 'confines' of the space, vulnerability is embraced rather than feared. Specifically, the soulful space is a 'holding space' for emotion and experience, within which one can relinquish the constriction of past and present embodied experience, by welcoming the self

in its 'unfinishedness' (ibid., 162). It offers the potential for complete acceptance of the self. The *soulful* space is a *therapeutic* space where healing can take place, and misconceived notions of the self, in relation to the past, the present and the future can be re-framed. It is not solely an intrapersonal space for the containment and exploration of emotion, it is also an interpersonal place of connection and the experience of a reciprocal relationship, based upon the development of mutual trust. As such, it provides a template for healthy relationships that are *authentic*. It is an environment that offers the security of confidentiality and non-judgment. It is an opportunity to embrace emotional vulnerability, to express one's self and have that received with unconditional acceptance. It provides a space within which to experience and express the full range of human emotion. Through acceptance by the therapist, one learns self-acceptance, a consequence of which is greater tolerance of others. In the extreme, the therapeutic encounter can be an extraordinary experience, bordering on a spiritual experience of connection and unconditional acceptance. The encounter serves as a portal or bridge to the authentic self.

The term 'affective space' has been used to describe any event attended as a social gathering, which results in 'emotional engagement', such as sport, music, or religious gatherings (Marsh, 7, unpublished paper). In these contexts too, the affective space is dependent upon human interaction. It constitutes a space that has emotional resonance 'in and through which much more happens than may be acknowledged at the time' (ibid., 8). It is potentially deeply affecting. The gathering creates subjective emotional responses, dependant in part upon the type of event. The affective space can be therapeutic if it encompasses elements of 'mindfulness', 'self-awareness', 'reflective practice', and 'emotional literacy'

and it is concerned with 'happiness' and 'well-being' (ibid., 14). In other words, if the intentions of those gathered are 'positive' they will generate positive emotions that are inherently therapeutic.

The term 'affective space' is also explicated as inner, private and 'reflective' (Partridge, 2011, 5). Within the context of music it refers to how one 'feels' in response, and specifically to associated feelings of 'transcendence' (ibid., 13). The affective space is a 'sacralised' space, that allows 'lifeworld-shaping meaning-making' to take place (ibid., 12). Like the therapeutic encounter it can be life enhancing and self-defining. The 'affective space' that Marsh describes is related to, or even dependent upon, social interaction and to some extent mood contagion, whereas Partridge elucidates it as a reflective space for the generation of the positive psychospiritual emotions. However, in both cases it is dependent upon an external cause. External circumstances affect the internal terrain. Likewise, the therapist affects the client. Indeed, the affective space always triggers an internal response, and therefore in all social contexts one person affects another. The therapist is aware of this and uses the process consciously.

In her elucidation of 'expressive licence', which is synonymous with the unbridled form of relating described above, Bernice Martin encapsulates the range of qualities that define the therapeutic process (1981, 14). It is,

a framed moment in which some kind of experience of the infinite, the impossible, the unbounded, becomes both possible and real. These moments are above all else, rituals of horizontal integration, fragments of brotherly equality snatched out of the divided reality of status and role differences. They employ the symbols of chaos and disorder in order to

create the momentary experience of *common* order. At its most intense such a moment confers ecstasy, and at the minimum it lifts the normal limits, controls and structures in favour of unbuttoned relaxation. The masks go with the freedom because they conceal our social and role-bound selves, thus allowing an escape from such inhibiting structures as hierarchy, responsibility and decorum. The selves underneath the masks cannot be called to account tomorrow for the activities of tonight: the normal rules are suspended (Martin, 1981, 14, original emphasis).

This passage has 'spiritual' overtones, because it speaks of the metaphysical, but it is equally psychological and sociological in orientation. As such, it confers the interplay of those three domains. Interdisciplinarity has to be at the heart of human experience, because simply dividing the human experience into separate paradigms is not realistic. The passage elucidates the centrality of the therapeutic relationship or 'alliance' to the process and also to the acceptance of the self. It makes explicit the collusion that is necessary when entering the space in the quest for personal freedom, equilibrium, and transcendence of anxiety. It elucidates the experience of one's unbounded 'authentic' self, devoid of any obligation to conform to the constrictions of an outer authority. It is representative of the unconditional acceptance and expression of one's vulnerable self within a confidential environment and trustworthy relationship.

The 'therapeutic alliance' between therapist and client is therefore a meaningful and potent 'collaborative relationship' (Cooper, 2008, 102). The importance of a positive emotional connection is emphasised, as is the need for 'mutual trust, acceptance and confidence' (ibid.). The therapeutic space, which is

environmental *and* relational, inevitably encompasses the private, interior space of both parties. Indeed, it is a complex convention of minds, bodies and their concomitant emotions. The emotional relationship is reciprocal, an alliance between therapist and client. As such, the therapist or facilitator requires awareness of the emotional transference and counter-transference that are often experienced physiologically, and are inevitably a part of the therapeutic process¹.

2.9 The Significance of the Body in Psychospiritual Self-Enquiry

The 'psychospiritual' paradigm emphasises the spiritual orientation of the therapeutic process, and the holistic connection with the physiology, through the emotions. Emotional development is a therapeutic process that attends to the whole person. The somatic and the psychospiritual levels of enquiry are equally significant aspects of the therapeutic process of emotional development. The emotional line of self-enquiry is necessarily *embodied*, because human beings *feel* emotions. Embodied enquiry is utilised in psychotherapy, spirituality and also as a form of phenomenological research methodology (Todres, 2007). The body provides information that is sensed physically, and the physiological correlates with thought *and* emotion. An embodied approach to psychotherapy concentrates on this relationship (ibid., 183).

The boundaries between psychotherapy and spirituality are broken down by explaining the therapeutic encounter in terminology that moves beyond the psychological, to that which is explicitly *spiritual* and *embodied*, and concerned with deep human relatedness. 'A spirituality informed by embodied enquiry is

¹ Transference is the client's reenacting of earlier relationships with the therapist and countertransference is the therapist's reactions to the client, which arise in response to the therapist's unresolved issues.

interested in an incarnate spirituality and the ways in which one's broadest contexts can be embodied and embraced in living a human life' (ibid., 185). As discussed in Chapter 1 in relation to the holistic milieu and spiritualities of life, it relies on the connection between the inner *and* relational aspects of experience in life itself, and the emotions are pivotal to that.

Although therapeutic culture denotes a paradigmatic shift, the legacy of Cartesian dualism, which has resulted in the vilification of the body and the subordination of its wisdom, still prevails in the form of the mind-body dichotomy witnessed within many areas of psychotherapy and medicine (Schermer, 2003, 60-61). In contrast, Eastern spiritual systems such as yoga sacralise the body, which is seen as 'a holy temple, [that] must be cared for, since it houses and expresses the God within' (ibid., 61-62). The discipline of body psychotherapy also explicates the significance of the body and somatic knowledge, in particular. It espouses the notion of 'somatic memory' and 'emotional memory', which can be released using suitable body-centric techniques to eliminate the psychological and physical 'restrictions' caused by these 'psychosomatic holdings' (Totton, 2003, 19). Working to release even pre-verbal emotional memories contained within the body can result in behavioural change. The therapist is the catalyst for change within the client and consequently the importance of the therapist being in touch with their own embodiment, is essential too (ibid., 62). It is not uncommon for 'somatic countertransference' to occur within the therapeutic alliance and the therapist must be able to identify symptoms that are attributable to the client, in order to empathise with the client (ibid., 85). This form of somatic awareness is beneficial for effective facilitation in general.

Awareness of felt senses and the interpretation of emotional cues are also an inherent part of the process of understanding intuitive insight, which can be improved through training (see Klein, 2003). The body acts as a conduit for 'gut feelings' that are visceral reactions to experience (Goleman, 1996, 52-53). Increased self-awareness reinforces this ability and it is anticipated that mindfulness practice will be a useful technique for achieving this. The author JK Rowling describes the physiological awareness that accompanies intuition and her sense of knowing in a recent interview about her forthcoming book: 'I had that totally physical response you get to an idea that you know will work. It's a rush of adrenaline. It's chemical. I had it with *Harry Potter* and I had it with this' (Crown, 2012). Physical responses to experiences, good and unsettling, register in the body, and increased awareness ensures that they are detected and that they can be applied to inform decision-making.

2.10 The Efficacy of the Therapeutic Process

Although psychotherapy *per se* is not a central concern of this thesis, it is interesting to note outcomes regarding participation in the therapeutic process. Evidence of the efficacy of counselling and psychotherapy is provided, but the figures from quantitative measures do not prove conclusively that changes are entirely due to participation in therapy, as opposed to other contributory factors (Cooper, 2008, 16). Statistics show that whilst 'most people improve' as a result of undergoing therapy, various studies claim that 'a significant minority', that is, between 5 and 15 per cent across a range of studies, deteriorate (*ibid.*, 25). Improvements that take place within the timeframe of the therapeutic intervention tend to be maintained upon completion of treatment, and evidence

shows that neither continued improvement nor deterioration follow the termination of treatment (ibid., 29). Detailed evidence is provided for a broad range of specific therapeutic interventions (ibid., 162-174). 'Counselling', which is defined as a 'supportive, non-directive, short-term form of talking therapy' is of particular interest (ibid., 163). Its client-centred principles will be suitable to support the non-clinical 'therapeutic' intervention for the empirical research, elucidated in Chapter 4. Evidence is taken from the Department of Health (2001), which suggests counselling may be of benefit for those needing help to adjust to life changes, thus reflecting its broad application, which extends beyond stress-related mental illness (Cooper, 2008, 164). Also of interest is art therapy, as creative, arts-based exercises will be facilitated as part of the therapeutic intervention. Although it is acknowledged as effective, evidence is scant and therefore inconclusive (ibid., 170).

As discussed above, counselling is of interest because it is utilised in non-clinical situations with people who do not have long-term mental illness or clinical diagnoses. Counselling provides a therapeutic space within which emotional healing can take place. Specifically, it provides the necessary conditions to improve self-awareness and emotional competence. According to Carl Rogers 'the rich experience of therapy' is a 'learning process' that allows an individual to discern more of the self, including behaviour and relationships (1951, 132). The experience and outcome of counselling is more than simply solving problems, it is the re-perception and redefinition of the self. It constitutes a process of inner development based on improving authenticity, through awareness and reflexivity that is broadly applicable. Evidence shows that over the course of therapy: discussion of problems decreased; personal insight

increased; discussion of plans increased; acceptance increased initially and then decreased in the fifth quintile (ibid., 134). Observations of clients show the shift to a more positive, future-oriented focus on subjective 'attitudes, emotions, values, [and] goals' (ibid., 136).

The process of psychotherapy successfully mobilises inner resources and the process of self-understanding that enables personal growth (Rogers, 1980, 115). In this context, growth refers to psychological flexibility, emotional maturity, openness and 'complete congruence', or authenticity. The benefits of these traits are clearly elucidated, 'when a person is functioning fully, there are no barriers, no inhibitions...This person is moving in the direction of wholeness, integration, a unified life' (1980, 128). It is clear from this statement that the goal of Rogerian counselling is a concern with the easing of 'dis-ease' that leads to the attainment of emotional competence and authenticity, indicative of subjective wellbeing.

These findings afford some insight into the nature and outcomes of engaging with the therapeutic process or 'space'. In particular they illustrate that psychotherapeutic practice encompasses the application of skills that may be useful in the facilitation of personal development techniques with non-clinical populations interested in improving subjective wellbeing. The evidence shows that the therapeutic focus is commensurate with that of contemporary spirituality, and subjective wellbeing. Indeed, implicit assumptions concerning the spiritual nature of wellbeing are delineated, wellbeing is 'more than simply *being well* or feeling good' (Partridge, 2005, 17, author's emphasis). This reiterates a point made by Heelas and Woodhead that 'wellbeing culture in *particular*' is the spiritual essence of 'wellbeing culture in *general*' (ibid., my

emphasis). There is a widespread use of holistic therapies sought for remedial purposes, but there is also a more profound emotional connection with the practices of the holistic milieu, that is emblematic of a contemporary spirituality.

2.11 Concluding Comments

Through his discourse concerned with the rise of a therapy culture, Furedi has clearly elucidated that a 'psychologisation' of life has taken place, and statistical evidence has been presented to demonstrate the openness to therapeutic intervention, which reflects this. As demonstrated, the increased psychologisation of life and the vernacular of therapeutics in particular, has become a primary method of meaning making. Emotional discourse has become increasingly prevalent, and this has resulted in the growth of a culture of emotionalism, that has resulted in an erosion of the divide that was once more evident between spirituality and psychology. Furedi's notion of an emotional, therapy culture creating a concurrent culture of vulnerability has been contested and a rigorous counter argument is elucidated that evidences not only the benefits of being emotionally, or psychologically engaged with life, but also of acknowledging and working with our inherent vulnerability. The significance of facilitating 'therapeutic space' within which it is possible to engage vulnerability constructively has been discussed in order to set a precedent for the empirical research to follow. The significance of authentic emotional expression, which lies at the 'heart' of the holistic milieu has been reiterated and the value of connecting with one's emotions in order to be able to give authentic expression to them has been shown to be beneficial therapeutically. In addition it has been adumbrated that this is an essential component of subjective wellbeing, a point

that is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3. The significance of emotional intelligence or awareness has been identified as beneficial for the intrapersonal relationship, and also with regard to interpersonal relationships and 'social intelligence', thus contesting the argument that the turn to the self is narcissistic.

Evidence has also been collated that delineates an initial connection between emotion, mindfulness and subjective wellbeing. It is now posited that by improving self-awareness through the use of mindfulness practice, it is possible to increase emotional competence, and that this in turn will have a positive impact upon subjective wellbeing. These phenomena and the nature of their connection will be interrogated in the following chapter.

Chapter 3: Establishing the Suitability of Mindfulness as a Practice for Wellbeing

3.1 Introduction

Chapter 2 established the predominance of emotional culture and the significance of therapeutic and psychological discourse as methods of meaning making. Building on this foundational work, Chapter 3 demonstrates the connection between subjective wellbeing, emotional development and mindfulness practice. Specifically, it establishes that developing self-awareness using mindfulness practice is an effective way to develop emotional competence, due to the capacity of mindfulness practice to mediate ‘psychosomatic’ awareness. The chapter draws upon a growing body of theoretical and empirical mindfulness research particularly within the field of health research, where the efficacy of mindfulness practice has been proven in myriad clinical contexts. It delineates contemporary mindfulness practice through an elucidation of the associated Buddhist context that is foundational. Thus demonstrating its validity as a psychospiritual practice. The psychosomatic connection with the emotions and the importance of developing emotional competence as a form of intrapersonal communication to improve eudaemonic wellbeing, in particular, is also established. Essentially, the psychospiritual nature of mindfulness is elucidated to establish its validity for use as part of the empirical research that follows.

3.2 Deconstructing Mindfulness

If we follow the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) online, at its most basic, mindfulness can be understood in two ways: (i) 'The state or quality of being mindful; attention; memory; intention, purpose' and (ii) 'the meditative state of being both fully aware of the moment and of being self-conscious of and attentive to this awareness; a state of intense concentration on one's own thought processes; self-awareness'. The latter definition correlates directly with mindfulness practice as explicated below, and the former with elucidations of the phenomenon. Significantly, the first definition describes the state of being mindful and alludes to a moral aspect, in terms of intention and purpose, and this is useful in establishing mindfulness as a practice that coheres with the ethos of the subjective turn. Mindfulness is connected with awareness of the present and consciousness of that awareness. It is reflexive and reflective, concerned with the ability to recall information and experience, and from this perspective it is directly connected with 'action', both cognitive and behavioural. It is a means of monitoring one's psychospiritual and psychosomatic self, without applying value-laden judgment. It raises self-awareness but as elucidated below, it is not identical with it.

Even from these superficial definitions, it is possible to begin to grasp the complexity of the term 'mindfulness' which corresponds with a cognitive *state*, a personality *trait*, and a meditative *practice*. Consequently it is advantageous to distinguish the psychological phenomenon from the practice, as far as possible. However, the interrelated nature of the two makes a discrete compartmentalisation implausible, and therefore the definitions inevitably intersect to some extent, in the interrogation that follows.

3.2.1 Differentiating Mindfulness from Self-Awareness

Mindfulness is defined as 'a non-judgmental, non-discursive awareness of one's perceptions, sensations, thoughts, and emotions', a generic description that matches many to be found within the mindfulness literature, in general (Evans, Baer and Segerstrom, 2009, 379). However, atypically it is also differentiated from self-awareness, and in particular 'private self-consciousness' and 'public self-consciousness' (ibid.). The former is awareness of personal 'thoughts, feelings and private motivations', and consists of a combination of 'self-reflectiveness' and 'internal state awareness', whereas 'public self-consciousness' is awareness of one's self in social situations (ibid.). It has been suggested from clinical trials that private self-consciousness correlates with negative emotional states such as anxiety, whereas the latter is more likely to be 'neutral or adaptive' (ibid.). Private self-consciousness constitutes a form of *intrapersonal* communication and public self-consciousness a form of *interpersonal* communication.

Self-awareness is associated with 'self-regulation theory' and the ability to regulate subjective behaviour in accordance with personal standards to the degree that one is self-aware (ibid.). Self-awareness results in self-judgment, comparison, and the desire to effect change, because it is attention focused on the self and as such it highlights discrepancy between oneself and one's standards (see Silvia and Duval, 2001; Fenigstein, Scheier and Buss, 1975; Duval and Wicklund, 1972). Self-awareness is dependent upon self-reflection, which, as stated, can result in self-judgment and therefore be detrimental to wellbeing, whereas mindfulness skills guard against any inclination towards negative self-judgment and the anxiety that provokes. In other words, mindfulness skills

balance the critical nature of self-awareness. However, the critical nature of self-awareness and self-reflection combined, is beneficial for the identification of behaviour that is detrimental to wellbeing.

3.2.2 Understanding Mindfulness

Mindfulness is described as an all-encompassing awareness, which holds the breath, body, thoughts, or sounds, in the spotlight of focused attention (Gilpin, 2008, 230). It is a continual stream of awareness that encompasses sensate experience and cognitive processes. It is described as 'a flexible state of consciousness that encompasses open and receptive attention and awareness of both one's inner state and outside world' (Schutte and Malouff, 2011, 1116). This accentuates the intrapersonal and interpersonal aspects of the practice, which is, like all psychospiritual practices ultimately socially applied. Mindfulness is variously interpreted as 'attention' or 'awareness' and as 'bare attention' (Thera, 1962, 9; 1971, 3). Bare attention refers to the process of investigating psychological and physiological states without pre-conception or value judgment, 'it attends to the bare facts of a perception without reacting to them by deed, speech or mental comment' (Thera, 1994). 'Attention and awareness' and 'acceptance', are described as the 'two' essential components of mindfulness (Bishop, Lau, Shapiro, Carlson, Anderson, Carmody, Segel, Abbey, Speca, Velting, and Devins, 2004, 232). Attention and awareness are grouped together, as both are concerned with self-regulation and a focus on immediate experience, which demonstrates 'curiosity, openness and acceptance' (ibid.). Acceptance is not a passive state, but an active response, 'a process of relating openly' to all phenomena as they arise in awareness (ibid., 233). It is connected with curiosity

and openness, traits that are sometimes referred to as 'beginners mind', which are requisite for acceptance to occur (see below).

Elsewhere the terms 'attention' and 'awareness' are differentiated from one another, and this is a useful distinction that helps identify more accurately the complexity of the phenomena that are collectively referred to as *mindfulness*. Awareness is the 'subjective experience' and perception of the inner and outer 'field of events' that arise in consciousness, whereas 'attention' is the focused awareness that identifies particular events within the general field of events (Brown and Ryan, 2004, 242-243). Awareness and attention are acknowledged as the two main features of consciousness distinct from cognition, and mindfulness is described as 'the monitoring, observing capacity of consciousness' (ibid., 242). Mindfulness is a primary, 'metacognitive skill', a 'cognition about one's cognition' that operates similarly to thought and emotion (Bishop et al., 2004, 233). This view is contested though, and mindfulness is described as a quality of consciousness used to monitor thought and emotion, and as such cannot be reduced to a metacognitive skill equal to thought and emotion (Brown and Ryan, 2004, 243). Mindfulness is 'perceptual', and operates 'upon' not 'within' thought and emotion, and as such it is argued that, 'if mindfulness involves observing thought, including thoughts about thoughts, it cannot *be* thought' (ibid., original emphasis). It is said to be an unbiased state of consciousness and as such it 'transcends' cognition. For the purposes of this study, awareness is regarded as the general observation of the 'inner and outer' field of events that constitute ones subjective life, whereas 'attention' is a 'concentrated' or 'single-pointed' awareness, focused upon one particular aspect of that experience.

3.2.3 A Buddhist Perspective

In the Buddhist context the Pali word '*sati*', which translates as mindfulness, stems from the verb *sarati*, 'to remember' and denotes not only recollection and memory but also present moment awareness (Kuan, 2009, 229). It is commensurate with reflexivity and 'wakefulness' which is characterised by a broad awareness that encompasses all phenomena, an understanding of them relative to one another and to one's emotional state (ibid.). Mindfulness is the 'awareness' explicated above, and concentration, which is often used as a preliminary practice to mindfulness meditation, is focused 'attention'. The emotions are inherently connected to both, as they encompass the cognitive and somatic responses one has to the objects of awareness.

Significantly, there is an ethical component to mindfulness practice, which stems from its Buddhist foundation in the Pali Canon, one that is not always made explicit within other contexts. It ensures that certain moral and ethical standards are maintained in the 'application' of mindfulness. It includes the observance of 'patience, harmlessness, loving-kindness and sympathy', in relation to oneself and others (Kuan, 2009, 229). The practitioner becomes conversant with their interactions in the world and learns to take personal 'responsibility' for what they contribute to the whole, as such, the social and individual value of the practice is emphasised (ibid.).

Due to the complexity of mindfulness it is possible to deconstruct it further to increase understanding. Four stages are delineated that specify the form and applications of awareness: (i) 'simple awareness'; (ii) 'protective

awareness'; (iii) 'introspective awareness'; and (iv) 'deliberately forming conceptions' (ibid., 41-56).

(i) Simple awareness

Simple awareness refers to the practice of consciously monitoring inner sensations and external experiences during meditation and in daily life. For example, when breathing in, it is necessary to have conscious awareness of that experience. The non-evaluative aspect of mindfulness is integral to this conception.

(ii) Protective awareness

Protective awareness relies upon simple awareness. It is self-awareness of the reaction to external phenomena as they arise. External objects should be encountered without attachment or aversion, and self-awareness protects against these outcomes. In addition, emotional resilience is developed as a result of guarding against the mental suffering caused by attachment and aversion. This practice also reinforces the development of a non-judgmental attitude.

(iii) Introspective awareness

Introspective awareness, like protective awareness, reinforces the preceding stage of mindfulness, it is described as 'a remedial measure' (ibid., 51).

Rather than being a preventive measure it is described as 'an antidote to unwholesome states' that are not deflected through the preceding functions of mindfulness practice.

(iv) Deliberately forming conceptions

The fourth stage, 'deliberately forming conceptions' requires the use of 'constructive imagination', which involves the re-conception or re-framing of

experience, through an alternative lens (ibid., 52). In a Buddhist context, the practitioner identifies with the strengths of the Buddha 'as a remedy against fear', for example (ibid.). To 'deliberately form conceptions' is to contemplate specific scenarios that are generally considered either negative or positive.

An example of forming a negative conception is contemplation of the impermanence of the body and one's mortality, particularly the decay of the body. This is regarded as nurturing a 'healthy dislike' for the body, and it enables the practitioner to transcend the psychological suffering that arises from attachment to the body, which may otherwise be conceived as a permanent and inherently existing object or 'self'. The Buddhist practice of loving kindness or *metta*, is included in this category of mindfulness, because it requires the deliberate conceptualisation of all sentient beings as if they were 'one's own son' (ibid., 55). This practice utilises 'constructive imagination' in order to develop compassion for all living beings.

From this account of mindfulness within a Buddhist context, it is evident that the practice, which begins with a particular form of self-awareness, is ultimately a means of generating altruism.

3.2.4 Applied Mindfulness

Further clarification is gained from the field of psychotherapy, which as previously established, forms a bridge between the psychological and the spiritual paradigms. Within this context, the interest in the application of mindfulness is variously 'clinical', 'scientific', 'theoretical' or 'personal', and it is concerned with both practitioner and client wellbeing (Germer, 2005, 10). Three components of mindfulness are identified, 'awareness', 'of present experience',

‘with acceptance’, the combination of which is requisite for an experience of ‘full mindfulness’ (ibid., 7, 8). Awareness is fundamental, as explicated above.

Similarly, bringing attention in to the present moment is pivotal. It requires single-pointed concentration, which is often initially focused upon the physical body, and particularly the breath. Acceptance results from attention intentionally focused on the present and acceptance of ‘what is’, which relieves suffering caused by dwelling negatively on the past, present, or future.

Although all three aspects are required for full mindfulness, acceptance, which is described as ‘an extension of non-judgment’, is a factor that particularly sets mindfulness apart from self-awareness (ibid.). As adumbrated above, acceptance is not a passive state. It is a proactive stance that demands a concerted effort to accept the status quo. *Non-acceptance* and the desire for change is required in order to fuel the motivation to engage in the practice of acceptance. Initially, through self-awareness and self-reflection, behaviour, including emotional responses to experience, is identified as problematic and it is this that leads to a desire for change. Once engaged, the practice requires the practitioner to work consciously and compassionately to reach a more permanent state of acceptance. Acceptance and behaviour change result from reframing experience, not by substituting it with a ‘positive thought’ but through a process of gradual *re-perception* that leads to improvements in emotional states and therefore lived experience. Indeed, acceptance is described as a precursor to behavioural change (ibid., 7).

‘Levels’ of mindfulness practice are specified, which exist on a ‘continuum’, from the ‘everyday’ or *informal*, to sacred types of *formal* seated meditation practice (ibid., 8). ‘Everyday’ mindfulness is experienced in daily life

and in psychotherapy. It consists of 'mindful moments' such as simply taking time out of routine to become aware of a single breath, or to reflect on emotional responses to minor life events (ibid.). At the other end of the continuum is a more 'precise and subtle awareness' that results from the sustained, intentional, and formal practice of an experienced practitioner (ibid., 9). Both experiences of mindfulness are simultaneously: 'non-conceptual'; 'present-centred'; 'non-judgmental'; 'intentional'; 'participant'; 'non-verbal'; 'exploratory'; and 'liberating' (ibid.). Essentially, mindfulness is an experience *in*, rather than cognition *of* experience. Importantly, it is *felt*. It is a pre-verbal awareness that perceives subtle levels of experience, through intimacy with the mind and body. Everyday mindfulness is the source of greater self-knowledge and ensures access to a range of emotion and therefore lived experience. It gives the practitioner options. It provides insight into the 'true' or impermanent nature of phenomena. It reveals the nature of suffering and its antidote, which results from understanding that emotional states and external conditions are cyclical and inconsistent.

As discussed below, formal meditation provides an opportunity to cultivate the psychological 'states' indicative of mindfulness practice, which through repetition, alter brain chemistry and become more established personality 'traits'.

3.3 'Formal' Mindfulness Meditation Practice

Contributing to the understanding of both the phenomenon and the practice of mindfulness, a distinction between the terms 'attention', 'concentration' and 'mindfulness' is made (Lazar, 2005). Attention is 'focused awareness',

concentration is attention focused on one object, and mindfulness is described as the 'exploration of the *distractions* to concentration' (ibid., 221, original emphasis). From this perspective the practice is investigative and concerned with all sensory experience, not a single object of concentration.

Mindfulness meditation is described as a 'dance between mindfulness and concentration' (Germer, 2005, 18). The practice consists of two distinct, but interrelated meditations 'concentration' and 'awareness/insight' (Brown and Ryan, 2004, 243). In general, 'concentration meditation' entails the objectification of internal or external phenomena, such as the breath, a candle flame, or a mantra. Concentration meditation is often used as a preliminary practice, within what is given the generic label of 'mindfulness meditation' or 'practice'. In this context it often begins with focus on the breath at a single point within the body, such as the abdomen or the nose. Each time the attention wanders from the object of concentration the practitioner patiently guides it back to the object of concentration. Concentration meditation is an efficacious, independent practice which can result in 'highly positive experiences', for example extreme relaxation or 'tranquillity', as it stills the mind, by reducing internal dialogue (ibid., 244). It is the propensity for stilling the mind, which makes it an appropriate precursor to the 'awareness/insight' meditation, which is the 'core' of mindfulness practice.

'Awareness/insight meditation' by contrast, requires consciousness of the incessant 'flow' of present moment experience, which encompasses the breath, physiology, and sensate experiences including sound, cognition and perception (ibid.). It is a 'heightened awareness' of the continuous flow of '(ap)perceptual phenomena' and it is 'active and energy gathering' (ibid.). It is dynamic, a state of

alertness that is constantly shifting from one object to another, just as they occur in consciousness, in their 'raw' state, prior to cognising. For example, sounds are all experienced equally as simple 'vibration', without the need to fathom their origins, to label, or judge them. Both the object and the perception of an object are equally under the scrutiny of mindful awareness, simply because they are products of consciousness. Both aspects of what is commonly termed 'mindfulness meditation' perform significant and distinct functions. Concentration focuses attention 'in' specific detail and calms the mind by bringing attention into the present, and awareness/insight provides *insight* into the constantly shifting nature of conscious experience.

Each teacher, author, or tradition has their particular pedagogical idiosyncrasies and practice may vary from session to session to some extent, but the main tenets of the meditation practice remain fairly consistent. There is an emphasis on the relinquishment of outcomes during practice, but naturally there are outcomes to be experienced, and these may include: calmness; increased awareness; patience; increased energy; clarity of mind; openness; and self-confidence (Harvey, 1990, 245). In addition, mindfulness practice can lead to experiences of altered states of consciousness, although this is not usually a specified purpose of the practice either (Brown and Ryan, 2004, 244).

Mindfulness practice is used to increase one's psychosomatic awareness, through the objective observation of sensory experience. This is achieved by maintaining an awareness of the self, as observer and in relation to the observed phenomena. As a preliminary procedure, the practice requires awareness of individual phenomena, for example, the breath. As described, initially the practice is directive, and it then proceeds to a non-directive form of awareness,

the practitioner simply *notices* sensate experience and cognition without attaching subjective perceptions and evaluations. It is a reflexive practice that enables 'awareness of awareness'. It allows the object of consciousness to be discerned compassionately and appreciatively, rather than judgmentally. Attention is constantly oriented toward the present moment and relinquishing outcomes. After developing concentration, the practitioner becomes aware of the constantly shifting nature of their awareness, for the duration of a practice session.

Mindfulness is a complex practice and as discussed above, in its popular contemporary 'secular' form, it is an amalgam of practices adopted and adapted from Buddhism. Whilst reference is made to this in the literature, it is often, but not always cited in practice. As explicated in Chapter 5, it is not possible to truly secularise mindfulness practice. However, it may be used within a clinical, and therefore 'secular' context. Within any context the practice is potentially *therapeutic*, or 'healing', that is, it is essentially psychospiritual and impacts upon wellbeing. To deepen understanding of the contemporary practice and its applications, an explication of the 'secularisation' process and the transition from a Buddhist 'spiritual' practice to a 'therapeutic intervention' will now be given.

3.4 The 'Secularisation' of the 'Spiritual'

Within the confines of this thesis it is not possible or necessary to provide a full account of the Buddhist context from which contemporary mindfulness practices have evolved. However, the following contextual information, will improve understanding of current, therapeutic perspectives, and the origins of the

practice delineated above. In addition, this will help to clarify the psychospiritual nature of the practice.

The practice of mindfulness originates from the Pali Canon of South-East Asia and the 'four establishments' or 'presencings' of mindfulness, as taught within the Theravada tradition (Thera, 1962; Thera, 1971; Silananda, 2002; Nhat Hanh, 2006; Gilpin, 2008). The four establishments of mindfulness extend from the *satipatthana sutta*, which outlines the practice of 'focusing, concentration, observation and contemplation' on the body, feelings, states of mind, and the objects of mind (Gilpin, 2008, 230). These contemplations form the basis of both Buddhist and clinical applications of mindfulness practice, as demonstrated above. They include the practices of serenity (*samatha*), insight (*vipassana*)², and concentration (*samadhi*) (ibid.). As delineated above the boundaries between these practices are often indistinct, and their inextricable connection has led, not only to the terms being used interchangeably, but also to them being encompassed under the rubric 'mindfulness'.

The practice of *vipassana* was popularised in the East and it spread to the West through the Burmese Theravada tradition of Mahasi Sayadaw and U Ba Kin (Kornfield, 1977; Fronsdal, 1998). *Vipassana* meditation continues to be practised today, in dedicated centres throughout the world, particularly those pioneered by the lay teacher Satya Narayan Goenka, who was a student of Ba Kin. The system of meditation taught globally by Goenka in minimally appointed centres dispenses with the ceremonial ritualisation, which often accompanies

² 'Insight' in a Buddhist context refers to insight into the 'true nature' or 'emptiness' of all phenomena. In this context, all phenomena including the 'self' are understood to be 'empty' of inherent existence. Everything and everybody is without 'self-nature', as there is no single component part that is representative of the whole (Blackmore, 2010, 468). In addition, it is understood that the 'true' nature of phenomena is impermanence. All phenomena are constantly changing form.

other institutionalised forms of Buddhist religious practice. Ritual is confined to the personal practice and there is no use of Buddhist iconography, 'orthopraxy' is esteemed over orthodoxy (Fronsdal, 1998). *Vipassana* meditation came to prominence in the West in the 1970s, and in North America 'insight meditation' was popularised by many lay teachers and authors including Joseph Goldstein, Jack Kornfield and Sharon Salzberg, who founded the Insight Meditation Society in Massachusetts in 1975 (ibid., 3).

A recent comparative evaluation of mindfulness as a form of Buddhist meditation and its counterpart in Western Psychology provides an invaluable account of the commonality and discrepancies between the two modes of practice (see Kuan, 2012). Importantly, mindfulness (*sati*) is 'comparable' with metacognition as previously explicated and it is described as a mental factor that is requisite for all forms of Buddhist meditation (ibid., 39). The term mindfulness as it is commonly used in contemporary, particularly psychological practice, relates to insight meditation (*vipassana*) and serenity meditation (*samatha*), and also concentration, as described above (ibid., 38). Whilst mindfulness is indicative of 'non-judgmental' awareness in clinical contexts, within a Buddhist context it involves 'memory, recognition, discrimination and conception' (ibid.). In addition, the common Western identification of mindfulness with insight meditation, and its separation from concentration and serenity, is identified as 'problematic' (ibid., 37). Also, that which is commonly referred to as 'mindfulness meditation' within a Western psychological context is understood to be 'concentration' within a Buddhist context. As explicated above, each of these practices has a significant role that contributes to the overall integrity of the practice, and the inclusion of each is therefore important. The discrepancy in

the definitions is evident as demonstrated above, the terminology clearly varies with the context, and in some it is necessarily simplified. Mindfulness as it is used within a psychological framework is a simplified form and naturally does not embody 'religious' significance, however, this does not detract from its 'sacred' status, which is evident within both contexts (see Chapter 5).

It is sufficient for the purpose of this thesis to proceed with an awareness of the complexity of mindfulness and an acknowledgement of the differences and commonality made evident here, because within this context further intricacies of the Buddhist paradigm are not relevant. It is sufficient to acknowledge that the ubiquity of contemporary mindfulness-based practices is due largely to its appropriation as a secular 'therapeutic' method, and this is probably due in part to the simplification process, which coheres with the turn away from institutionalised religion in the West. The clinical applications of mindfulness are majorly responsible for the current popularity of the practice and so an elucidation of this context is also necessary to gain a balanced view of mindfulness, as it is commonly practiced within subjective wellbeing culture.

3.5 Mindfulness Practice and its Clinical Applications

The non-sectarian practice of mindfulness is used to relieve both psychological and physiological disorders (Germer et al., 2005; Baer, 2006; Dryden and Still, 2006; Thompson and Waltz, 2007; Mace, 2008). There is a wide range of programmes available, two of the most widely researched of which, are the eight-week, mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR), and 'mindfulness-based cognitive therapy' (MBCT) clinical programmes. Jon Kabat-Zinn authored the

MBSR course at the University of Massachusetts (UMASS), Medical School in 1979, and Zindel Segal, Mark Williams and John Teasdale at Oxford University, developed MBCT in 2002 based largely on the structure of the MBSR course. In an elucidation of mindfulness and the MBSR course, Kabat-Zinn acknowledges the historical context, but states that mindfulness, or 'attention' is a universal phenomenon, and that 'there is nothing particularly Buddhist about it' (Kabat-Zinn, 2003, 145). In other words, it is a universally applicable practice and hence, the Buddhist lineage and the peculiarities of the practice, do not need to be made explicit, in order to benefit from the practice.

The rationale for the MBSR course is as 'a training vehicle for the relief of suffering' within a medical context (ibid., 148). The Stress Reduction Clinic at UMASS was originally established as a referral service for patients who had been unresponsive to allopathic medical treatments. The 'stress' that the course targeted was the psychological anguish that often accompanies physical pain and illness. However, in the intervening years stress itself has become a medical diagnosis, and it has become increasingly recognised as the cause, and not solely the effect of physical illness (Kabat-Zinn, November, 2010). Although the non-sectarian nature of the practice is stated, the value of deepening mindfulness practice by attending courses at Buddhist centres is recommended particularly for instructors, who must also have their own daily, formal meditation practice (Kabat-Zinn, 2003, 149). In addition, a caution is given against 'denaturing the dharma dimension' and the importance of remaining true to the ethos of the Buddhist teachings is emphasised, specifically, acknowledging the impermanence of all phenomena, and practising compassion (ibid., 146). The MBSR course provides a contemporary outlet for the Buddhist teachings,

particularly *vipassana* or insight meditation. It has increased the accessibility of mindfulness practice in the West, through the process of 'secularisation' and simplification, and particularly by offering it in a clinical context as an antidote to stress.

As noted above, also influential in popularising mindfulness practice is MBCT, which was designed specifically to reduce relapse in patients recovering from 'unipolar major depression' (Teasdale, Segal and Williams, 1995; Teasdale, Segal, Williams, Ridgeway, Soulsby and Lau, 2000; Segal, Williams and Teasdale, 2002; Teasdale, Moore, Hayhurst, Pope, Williams and Segal, 2002). MBCT provides an alternative to traditional cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), which aims to consciously change cognition. MBCT by contrast, develops 'metacognitive awareness' or reflexive awareness (Teasdale et al. 2002, 285). This skill enables the practitioner to understand the transience of negative thoughts and feelings, and their existence as separate from the self. The *acceptance* of thoughts and feelings 'as they are' is a proactive stance, the ethos of which is antithetical to traditional CBT, which requires thoughts to be methodically and intentionally reframed. The mindfulness-based approach is to 'work with' thoughts and illness, to practice compassion and accept the status quo, in order to change the fundamental, *emotional* relationship with lived experience.

The standardisation and replicable nature of MBSR, MBCT, and other mindfulness-based courses, combined with their accessibility and measurability against symptoms, has led to a profusion of empirical research being undertaken to test myriad hypotheses. This is also reflected in the number of academic research centres dedicated to mindfulness studies and training, not only in North America, but also in Britain at the universities of Aberdeen, Oxford, Bangor and

Exeter. In addition, the plethora of empirical mindfulness research within secular, clinical contexts has contributed to MBCT being recommended as a treatment for depression within Britain by the National Institute for Clinical and Health Excellence (NICE) (Gilpin, 2008, 227). The mindfulness research that appertains to this thesis and subjective wellbeing and ‘emotional development’ or ‘emotional competence’ in particular, will now be interrogated.

3.6 Mindfulness, Emotional Competence and Subjective Wellbeing: The Empirical Evidence

As demonstrated, mindfulness practice can be used to raise awareness of the self, behaviour and experience. Specifically, it is a ‘clear awareness of one’s inner and outer worlds, including thoughts, emotions, sensations, action, or surroundings’ (Brown, Ryan and Creswell, 2007, 213). As a method of self-observation it can be used to distinguish the ‘bare facts’ from their emotive counterparts, in order to realise a less subjective perspective of personal experience. Paradoxically, in light of Furedi’s argument, conversancy with emotion lends distance and perspective that can lead to a reduction of emotional dissonance and personal suffering.

Extensive, predominantly quantitative, empirical research into the efficacy of mindfulness-based interventions (MBI) continues to be undertaken within myriad clinical settings. The purpose here is not to prove efficacy in general, but to consider the application of mindfulness in relation to emotional development and subjective wellbeing. Of particular relevance in this respect is the extensive review of empirical research, conducted by Ruth Baer (2003). Her account provides specific information that iterates the emotional effects of

participating in MBIs with regard to a variety of health issues. Whilst clinical populations are not the focus of the present thesis, the rigorous research detailed below is especially significant as it validates the use of mindfulness techniques for improving quality of life, and it helps to delineate the connection between mindfulness practice and the emotions. It should also be noted that the mindfulness-based 'interventions' are more than simply a meditation course, for example the MBSR course contains a great deal of reflexive work with a psychological emphasis.

Firstly and significantly, participation in an MBI results in 'cognitive change' (ibid., 129). This is the ability of an individual to change their perception of and relationship to, their thoughts and emotions. Specifically this requires the detached observation of thought, combined with the understanding that thoughts are not necessarily true perceptions of reality. This results partially from adopting a non-evaluative attitude to thought, a trait indicative of mindfulness practice. This finding was the result of a number of research studies with patients suffering from: chronic pain (Kabat-Zinn, 1982, 1990); borderline personality disorder (Linehan, 1993a, 1993b); binge eating disorders (Kristeller and Hallett, 1999); and in the prevention of depressive relapse (Teasdale, 1999; Teasdale et al., 1995).

Secondly, 'self management' occurs as a result of participation in an intervention (Baer, 2003, 129). Self-management results in: management of emotional responses; an increase in 'considered' decision-making; change in behaviour; improvement in coping skills; and an increased ability to focus attention positively. Through a process of self-observation, self-awareness arises. From this, originates the ability to manage and specify experience by

modifying habitual behaviour. Again, the increased ability to self-manage was the finding of multiple studies (Kabat-Zinn, 1982; Linehan, 1993b; Marlatt, 1994; Teasdale et al., 1995; Kristeller and Hallett, 1999).

The third outcome, 'relaxation', is said to be a result of MBIs but not a principal goal (Baer, 2003, 130). An increase in relaxation is particularly thought to assist in the management of stress-related physical illnesses including psoriasis (Kabat-Zinn, Wheeler, Light, Skillings, Scharf, Cropley, Hosmer and Bernhard, 1998) and fibromyalgia (Goldenberg, Kaplan, Nadeau, Brodeur, Smith and Schmid, 1994). Herbert Benson's theory of 'the relaxation response', which was the result of extensive empirical research, is cited (Benson, 1975; Wallace, Benson and Wilson, 1984). Although the majority of Benson's research involved transcendental meditation also, the requisite conditions specified are necessary for mindfulness meditation: a quiet environment; a concentrative device; a passive attitude; a comfortable position (Benson, 1975, xviii). In light of the above explications, this is indicative of concentration meditation, in particular. The relaxation response is described as 'a physical state of deep rest that changes the physical and emotional responses to stress' (Benson, 2012). Physiological changes indicative of the relaxation response include a decrease in oxygen consumption, respiratory rate, heart rate, blood pressure and muscle tension, and an increase in alpha waves in the brain, which are connected with wellbeing (Benson, 1975, 74-75 and 60).

Fourthly, Baer lists 'acceptance' of both physiological and psychological experiences (2003, 130). Acceptance is a proactive attitude that requires the conscious assimilation of experience, as previously delineated. Particular reference is made to Steven Hayes, the founder of the mindfulness-based

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), and other psychotherapeutic discourse on the relationship between acceptance and change (Hayes, 1994; Hayes, Jacobsen, Follette and Dougher, 1994). Baer concludes with a definitive statement concerning the centrality of acceptance to mindfulness-based interventions 'all of the treatment programmes reviewed here include acceptance of pain, thoughts, feelings, urges, or other bodily, cognitive, and emotional phenomena, without trying to change, escape, or avoid them' (Baer, 2003, 130). This is pivotal to contemporary mindfulness practice.

Mindfulness is described as a 'state of consciousness', and a personality 'trait' that can be developed through training, and which has salutary effects (Schutte and Malouff, 2011, 1116). Outcomes include: improved mental health and relationships (Brown, Ryan and Creswell, 2007); and improved subjective wellbeing, which is measured in this particular context as greater positive affect, a decrease in negative affect, and improved satisfaction with life (Baer, Smith, Lykins, Button, Krietemeyer and Sauer, 2008; Brown, Kasser, Ryan, Linley and Orzech, 2009; Brown and Ryan 2003; Falkenstrom, 2010; Howell, Digdon, Buro and Sheptycki, 2008). In addition there is a direct correlation between an increase in mindfulness practice and increased wellbeing (Falkenstrom, 2010; Fredrickson, Cohn, Coffey, Pek and Finkel, 2008; Zautra, Davis, Reich, Nicassario, Tennen and Finan, 2008). Evidence also links increased mindfulness with emotional intelligence and emotional adaptability, specifically 'perceiving, understanding, managing and harnessing emotions effectively in the self and others' (Schutte and Malouff, 2011, 1116). These emotional 'competencies' include the recognition, application, regulation, and utilisation of emotional

knowledge in specific ways, for example utilising 'positive mood to facilitate creativity' (ibid.)

In their empirical research, Schutte and Malouff (2011) look specifically at the role of emotional intelligence³ as the mediator of mindfulness and subjective wellbeing. The quantitative study involved 125 university students, who were measured for levels of mindfulness, emotional intelligence (EI) and subjective wellbeing using specific tools: the Frieberg Mindfulness Inventory (Kohls, Sauer and Walsch, 2009); the Assessing Emotions Scale (Schutte, Malouff, Hall, Haggerty, Cooper, Golden, Dornheim, 1998; Schutte, Malouff and Bhullar, 2009); the Positive and Negative Affect Scales (PANAS) (Watson, Clark and Tellegen, 1988); and the Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener, Emmons, Larson and Griffin, 1985). The hypothesis was that the key features of mindfulness, which are specified as training attention and developing non-judgmental awareness, foster EI, and that the 'adaptive' intrapersonal and interpersonal aspects of EI induce greater wellbeing (Schutte and Malouff, 2011, 1118). Results from the study show that 'greater mindfulness' was 'significantly associated' with improved 'positive affect', 'life satisfaction' and EI, as well as a reduction in 'negative affect' (ibid., 1117). In addition, greater EI correlated with improved

³ Mayer, Salovey and Caruso (2000) define emotional intelligence as 'an ability to recognize the meanings of emotions and their relationships and problem solve on the basis of them. Emotional Intelligence is involved in the capacity to perceive emotion, assimilate emotion-related feelings, understand the information of those emotions and manage them' (in Slaski and Cartwright, 2003, 234). Slaski and Cartwright specify 'emotional competence' as a more appropriate term that encompasses the skills: '(i) accurate self appraisal; (ii) the ability to perceive and understand one's own emotions and the emotions of others; (iii) the ability to form and maintain intimate relationships; (iv) the ability to express and manage emotions; (v) the ability for self-control; (vi) the ability to validate one's thinking and feeling; (vii) the ability to handle change and effectively solve problems' (ibid., 235). Despite anomalies in the many definitions that exist, there is a consensus that self-awareness is fundamental to EI and that self-confidence and self-acceptance are also significant (ibid.). Self-awareness is requisite to ensure that 'emotional reaction[s]' do not detrimentally impair judgment (ibid.).

Boyatzis states 'emotional intelligence is observed when a person demonstrates the competencies that constitute self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and social skills at appropriate times and ways in sufficient frequency to be effective in the situation' (2000, 344).

'positive affect' and 'life satisfaction', and reduced 'negative affect' (ibid.).

Development of mindfulness and EI therefore lead to greater subjective wellbeing as measured above, and significantly 'mindfulness training could provide a practical means of increasing emotional intelligence' (ibid., 1118).

Whilst these results are encouraging, further longitudinal studies are recommended by the researchers in order to gain better understanding of the correlation between the three measured variables, as this study was specifically designed to test the above hypothesis. However, the study provides evidence that is highly pertinent within the current context. It supports the notion that mindfulness is a valid method of emotional development, and that together they conduce subjective wellbeing.

Mindfulness and EI are analogous because they both accentuate perception, understanding and regulation, of thoughts and emotions (Chu, 2010, 170). There is also evidence to show that higher levels of EI are associated with 'less subjective stress' and therefore 'better health and wellbeing' (ibid., 169). Having conducted an empirical research project that involved 351 working adults with either a 'concentrative, mindfulness or integrated' meditation practice of at least 20 minutes per day, and 20 graduate students involved in a follow-up study, it was proved that meditation was an effective method for developing EI, and that this in turn enhanced psychological wellbeing (ibid., 172 and 176). The salutary effects were attributed to the regulation of attention and emotional processes, and a decrease in emotional disturbance due to 'sustaining focus or surrendering to the flow of experience' (ibid., 176). As hallmarks of mindfulness practice, 'attention', 'acceptance' and 'emotional competence' are validated as efficacious in the quest for subjective wellbeing.

There is a significant connection between mindfulness practice, emotional development, and the potential to strengthen emotional resilience, which is 'the ability to maintain positive emotions in the face of adversity' (Arden, 2010, 171). It is possible to consciously alter neurochemistry using mindfulness practice, and learning to process sensory data positively and calmly, are central to this process (ibid., 2). The research of the neuroscientist Richard Davidson, affirms the connection made between mindfulness meditation, positive affect, wellbeing, and emotional resilience (ibid., 171). The ability to reduce negative affect, a measure of wellbeing, is a feature of what is termed a positive 'affective style', a term that refers to 'affective reactivity' and 'dispositional mood' (Davidson, Jackson and Kalin, 2000, 897). Each person has an emotional style that has a 'set point', which is largely determined from birth, however it has been shown that it is possible to shift this default position using mindfulness meditation (Arden, 2010, 171). By practising mindfulness meditation it is possible to induce a temporary positive emotional 'state', which eventually becomes embedded as a more permanent, habitual 'trait'. Over time and with repetition, it is possible to orient one's emotional set point increasingly towards a positive mental outlook. As demonstrated by Schutte and Malouff (2011) above, this has a salutary impact on subjective wellbeing.

A qualitative diary study that mediates the effects of mindfulness practice on chronic lower back pain in older adults focuses on the main outcomes resulting from participation in an eight-week MBSR-based intervention (Morone, Lynch, Greco, Tindle, and Weiner, 2008, 843). The outcomes reported include 'improvement in attention skills', 'improved sleep', and 'achieving well-being', both immediate and longer term (ibid., 845). Training in mindfulness meditation,

resulted in 'positive affect' that led to greater physical and psychological wellbeing, that included 'immediate' 'restorative effects' experienced by the majority of participants, including 'relaxation', 'serenity', and feeling 'refreshed and regenerated' (ibid., 845). In the longer-term, participants reported 'profound, life-altering changes' and improved 'quality of life' (ibid.). The emotional set point for these participants was most probably comparatively low prior to training, and this may account for the profound shift. It will be interesting to determine if the experience has such a profound effect on participants who are not under extreme physical or psychological stress, that is, a 'non-clinical' population.

3.7 Mindfulness and Affective Neuroscience

Although it is not possible or necessary within the confines of this thesis to provide an extensive review of the neuroscience research that documents the neurological correlates of mindfulness practitioners, it will be helpful to provide an overview as the use of brain-imaging technology has begun to provide conclusive evidence of the salutary effects of meditation. Indeed, neuroscience research that utilises functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), electroencephalography (EEG) and electrooculography (EOG) to monitor 'neuroplasticity', provides useful information concerning activation and change within the brain, particularly in the prefrontal cortex (PFC) and amygdala, during meditation and over sustained periods of time, following the repeated practice of mindfulness meditation. Neuroplasticity is the term given to the brain's ability to alter form, which occurs when new neuronal pathways have been created and consolidated within the brain. Neuroscience shows that action and repetition

establishes neurogenesis which results in faster communication within the brain, by building layers or sheaths of a fatty substance called myelin around the pathways (Siegel, 2010, 42). This propensity for change can be utilised to improve wellbeing by shifting the emotional set point mentioned above. Indeed, monitoring neuroplasticity provides evidence of change that is indicative of the human capability to 'train' the brain to increase emotions such as happiness (Davidson, 2005, 383). Richard Davidson elucidates the value of emotional training, of 'cultivating our emotional mind' (ibid., 383). He states the efficacy of meditation as a method of training attention and emotion, and validates this with reference to research that utilised the above technology to monitor activity in the brains and hearts of meditators. Research shows that changes occur in the prefrontal cortex, the area of the brain 'associated with increased wellbeing' (ibid., 385). Davidson's empirical research monitored the neuronal changes in participants of concentration meditation and compassion meditation. In addition, participants in the eight-week MBSR programme were monitored for 'emotion-related brain activity' as a result of previous research that showed meditation to 'reduce anxiety' and 'increase positive affect' (Davidson, Kabat-Zinn, Schumacher, Rosenkrantz, Muller, Santorelli, Urbanowski, Harrington, Bonus, and Sheridan, 2003, 564). The MBSR participants exhibited affirmative change not only to the brain structure, but also to the immune system (ibid., 569). The research shows that although an individual's 'affective style' may stem from learnt behaviour, psychological 'states' that are trained through mindfulness practice, can become more permanent 'traits'. It provides further evidence that emotional intelligence, or competence can be learnt through the

practice of mindfulness meditation, and that it develops over time. (See Mace, 2008, 24-31, for details of studies involving other methods of meditation).

3.8 Mindfulness, Emotion and the Therapeutic Effect

As discussed in Chapter 1, the turn to the self is indicative of holistic therapeutic methods, and this is representative of a surge of interest in “‘embodied experience’” as a ‘means to therapeutic change’ (Gilpin, 2008, 227). The body provides subjective, emotional ‘data’, which is experienced in the form of sensations. The mind-body connection is implicit within the holistic milieu, and is often made explicit, in relation to body-centric practices. Also, within some forms of psychotherapeutic practice ‘somatic experience’ is acknowledged as a valuable means of developing both ‘awareness and attention’ (Totton, 2003, 77). These two psychological traits are likened to muscles that can be exercised through practice. In addition, it is possible at a physiological level to bring repressed memories, and their concomitant emotions into full consciousness (ibid). The body is a channel for the communication of repressed emotion. Increased awareness of the body and its physical cues can give rise to emotional awareness and vice-versa. The body, emotion, attention and awareness, coalesce in holistic therapies to conduce psychosomatic change. Indeed, ‘bringing conscious awareness to our experience is the fundamental mechanism of change’ (ibid.). Familiarity with the physiological changes that are experienced in conjunction with emotion become apparent through the practice of mindfulness, particularly through the use of the ‘body scan’ exercise, which requires attention to be placed systematically on each part of the body. Indeed, ‘emotional states, like pain and illness, bring the body into consciousness by virtue of their

sensational dimensions' (Lupton, 1998, 87). The emotions and their concomitant 'feelings' can be used to induce present moment awareness via the body, and vice versa.

'The *essence* of emotion' is 'the collection of changes in body state that are induced in myriad organs by nerve cell terminals, under the control of a dedicated brain system, which is responding to the content of thought relative to a particular entity or event' (Damasio, 1994, 139, original emphasis). The causal relationship consists of three basic stages: an event; cognition; and physiological response. The evidence shows that experience triggers emotional responses, which are both psychological and visceral, and emotion can therefore be understood as a bridge between the mind and body. The therapeutic significance of personal development at the emotional level is that it has the potential to impact both mind and body. All emotions are accompanied by feelings, however, not all feelings are related to emotions (Damasio, 1994, 143). Indeed, 'background feelings' which are identified as largely responsible for contributing to 'mood' are continuous and exist between emotions, and it is speculated that these are the feelings that most people are conversant with (ibid., 150). A mood is less acute than an emotional experience of feeling, and there is not necessarily a direct correlation with 'one' trigger. For example it is possible to know that 'I am in a bad mood' without knowing the precise cause. This can be differentiated from an emotional feeling, such as anger, that arises in direct and immediate response to a particular trigger. It is useful to understand the difference, because awareness of emotional feelings as they arise enables the emotional management that ensures emotional competence and mood regulation, necessary for a peaceful state of mind. Becoming conversant with feelings in

general, is an outcome of body-oriented mindfulness practice, and mindfulness of subjective emotional 'states' based on an understanding of anatomical change improves EI.

Clinical psychologist and psychotherapist John Welwood, provides an account of the role of mindfulness in the 'transformation of emotional energy' at the somatic and the cognitive levels (1983, 88). Mindfulness practice is identified as an efficacious method in the transformation of emotional states and the emotional set point. A 'spectrum of felt energy' is elucidated, based on a deconstruction of the stages of the inner experience (ibid., 80). The model is idiosyncratic, but based on experience. It provides a valuable understanding of the complexity of emotion, in the therapeutic process. The model consists of four components, 'basic aliveness', 'felt senses', 'feelings', and 'emotions' (ibid.). 'Basic aliveness' is commensurate with being 'vulnerable' in the sense of '*letting the world in*' (ibid., 81, original emphases). It is the basis of feeling and emotion, and it is also commensurate with subjective wellbeing (ibid.). The 'felt sense' is an unidentified intermediary state, that may result in for example, a general sense of unease, similar to 'mood', as delineated above. It may encompass psychological states such as anger, and physiological cues such as the tightening of muscles in the chest or abdomen, that restrict the breathing and affect the stomach (ibid., 82). Such states are not always immediately comprehensible but mindfulness practice can be used to identify specific feelings and emotions. Welwood's account coheres with that of Antonio Damasio. Emotion has a greater intensity than feeling and demands attention, whereas feeling is often 'in the background of awareness' (ibid.).

The therapeutic imperative is to work through this hierarchy using a top-down approach by identifying the emotions, the feelings, and then the felt sense in order to reconnect with one's basic aliveness, or subjective wellbeing. What is essential to psychotherapy is 'to untangle emotional problems and strengthen identity' and therefore the primary focus sometimes becomes the exploration of feelings and emotions, which is often prioritised over reconnecting with one's basic aliveness (ibid., 84). To redress the balance, mindfulness meditation is proposed as an alternative method of processing emotion. It serves as 'antidote' to the 'talking cure' associated with traditional psychotherapeutic methods. Mindfulness meditation enables the practitioner to encounter and assimilate emotions, by 'keeping his seat' and 'riding them out' (ibid.). This approach enables the practitioner to 'glimpse how, underneath the whitecaps of emotional frenzy and the broader swells of feeling, all is quite calm in the depths of the ocean, where our personal life problems empty into larger, universal life currents' (ibid.). Beneath the tumult of emotion lies a consistent inner peace that it is possible to access through meditative practice. Welwood states,

What is essential in this approach is to identify fully with basic aliveness, the larger open space around and inside emotions. By realizing this spaciousness, emotional turmoil begins to appear as a smaller drama in the middle of a much larger awareness. When we can dissolve into this larger awareness, this free energy, emotion becomes an opportunity to explore our depths, instead of getting tossed around by the waves on the surface of our being (ibid., 89).

This statement qualifies mindfulness-based emotional development as a method to improve wellbeing, and this is consistent with Schutte and Malouff's (2011) quantitative findings that mindfulness and subjective wellbeing are mediated by EI. Welwood's poetic account breathes life into the findings of empirical affective neuroscience research, which provides quantitative evidence that 'emotional learning' is possible, and demonstrates that certain areas of the brain exhibit plasticity in relation to it (Davidson et al., 2000, 900). Both approaches to understanding emotional development strengthen the case for mindfulness-based emotional development and demonstrate the mediating qualities of the emotions with regard to mind and body, and the importance of emotional development in the context of wellbeing, the therapeutic milieu, and ultimately the turn to the self. Indeed, mindfulness practice with its psychosomatic emphasis epitomises subjective wellbeing culture.

3.9 Eudaemonic Wellbeing: A Process of Self-Actualisation

In the psychological research literature, a distinction is made between 'hedonic wellbeing' and 'eudaemonic wellbeing'. For example, psychologists concerned with research into hedonic wellbeing focus on a pleasure-pain continuum to measure subjective wellbeing, and empirical research mostly involves the measurement of three variables: life satisfaction; positive affect; and negative affect (Diener and Lucas, 1999). Hedonic wellbeing research often focuses upon the effects of life events on the emotions, and while this is useful it provides a somewhat incomplete account of the complexity of emotional experience and particularly the beneficial effects of experiencing the full range of emotions, including those commonly perceived as 'negative'. In contrast, eudaemonic

wellbeing, which is delineated below, is indicative of a broader concept of wellbeing, including self-actualisation. The former is concerned with transitory 'states' and the latter with more deeply embedded 'traits'.

Wellbeing relies on emotional competence and as appropriate, the expression of emotion. Specifically, the suppression of 'negative' emotions such as sadness has a deleterious effect on wellbeing, whilst there is value in the experience and expression of emotion (Ryan and Deci, 2001, 151). Research suggests that the repression of emotion adversely affects both psychological and physiological health, and therefore subjective wellbeing. Indeed, beneficial effects have been identified in people who have 'emotional access and congruence' (ibid.). Emotional expression coheres with authenticity and wellbeing. As stated above, hedonic wellbeing research utilises positive affect as a measure of subjective wellbeing, whereas the eudaemonic approach does not. The latter regards positive affect as a likely consequence of 'eudaimonic living', but not as a goal in itself (ibid.). In this regard, the eudaemonic stance is synchronous with that of mindfulness practice, which advocates the confrontation of emotion, with non-judgmental acceptance.

Eudaemonic wellbeing shares commonality with the Buddhist concept of *sukha*, a type of 'enduring happiness' that is defined as 'a state of flourishing that arises from mental balance and insight into the nature of reality' (Ekman, Davidson, Ricard and Wallace, 2005, 60). Buddhist philosophy does not differentiate between the emotions and other mental states, but to some extent it is like psychology in that it acknowledges the importance of developing the 'traits' that lead to long-term change indicative of eudaemonic wellbeing. In psychological terms *sukha* 'is a trait and not a state', a lasting state of mindful

awareness and equanimity that is maintained through training ‘attention, emotional balance and mindfulness’ (ibid., 61 and 60). Specifically, training in mindfulness guards against the misperception of ‘sensory’ experience, which can arise in response to misconceptions regarding the permanent nature of phenomena. It leads to a ‘lasting state of well-being’ that arises due to changes in emotional state, mood, and eventually, through sustained practice, one’s temperament (ibid., 60). *Sukha* is not dependent upon external stimuli and transient pleasures, which are often the result of temporarily satisfying cravings, and as such it endures even when external stimuli are withdrawn. It is contingent upon equanimity gained through ‘mindfulness and introspection’, which leads to enduring change due to enhanced awareness of emotions as they arise (ibid., 61). Within a Buddhist context the emotions are understood to be psychospiritual as defined by Schermer above, and those emotions commonly perceived as ‘negative’ in other contexts are regarded as a valuable aspect of mindfulness practice, because they provide the opportunity to ‘regulate experience and action’ (ibid.). Indeed, mindfulness practice demands and builds emotional resilience, as well as environmental awareness. It also fosters understanding of the interconnection of all phenomena, and this awareness guards against narcissism, by fostering compassion and empathy. Thus, the outcomes of practising mindfulness serve as a response to the argument that subjective wellbeing culture is fundamentally narcissistic.

The differentiation between ‘hedonic’ and ‘eudaemonic’ wellbeing is useful as it serves to deconstruct what is a complex and otherwise nebulous term. Rather than being primarily concerned with happiness *per se*, eudaemonic wellbeing is concerned with authenticity, and ‘eudaimonism’ is described as ‘an

ethical theory that calls people to recognize and to live in accordance with the *daimon* or “true self” (Waterman, 1993, 678). It is a theory of ‘self-realization’, concerned with the attainment of both collective and subjective human potentiality (ibid.). The daemon is the ‘perfected’ or ‘unadulterated’ self that one can aspire to, and it represents the quest for meaning and purpose in life. Within this context, the significance of expressivity arises again, and the phrase ‘personal expressiveness’, used in relation to eudaemonism, is defined as a particularly intense connection with a task, aliveness and a feeling of completeness, and an intuitive sense that one is fulfilling one’s life purpose (ibid., 679). There is commonality here, with Abraham Maslow’s ‘peak experience’, and Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi’s (1992) theory of ‘flow’, both of which are indicative of total immersion in a task, the experience of time passing with rapidity, and an accompanying sense of fulfilment. Eudaemonia is equated with ‘meaningful living conditioned upon self-truth and self-responsibility’, both of which are principles central to the subjectivisation thesis (David Norton (1976), quoted in Ryff and Singer, 2008, 17). In this context, wellbeing is equated with ‘human flourishing’, thus emphasising the dynamism of wellbeing as a complex psychological construct. In a thorough exposition of the philosophical origins of eudaemonia, Carol Ryff and Burton Singer state,

Aristotle was clearly not concerned with the subjective states of feeling happy. Rather, his conception of the highest good towards which we all should be reaching was the task of self-realization, played out individually, each according to his or her own disposition and talent (2008, 17).

Thus, eudaemonia is more than a transitory form of happiness as it has lasting consequences. It is a happiness that emanates from the depths of a person who endeavours to fulfil their individual potential. Drawing upon rich philosophical and psychological origins, the 'core dimensions' of eudaemonic wellbeing are specified as: self-acceptance; purpose in life; environmental mastery; positive interpersonal relationships; autonomy; and personal growth (Ryff, 1989, 1995; Ryff and Singer, 2008). This categorisation is indicative of what it means to be 'healthy, well, and fully functioning' (Ryff and Singer, 2008, 19). The six dimensions of 'psychological wellbeing' elucidated below are based upon the tenets of nine eminent psychologists: Gordon Allport; Bernice Neugarten; Charlotte Buhler; Erik Erikson; Viktor Frankl; Marie Jahoda; Carl Jung; Abraham Maslow; and Carl Rogers (ibid., 20-23).

i Self-Acceptance

In this context, self-acceptance is equated with positive self-regard, and it is pivotal to mental health as defined by Jahoda. It is a feature of Maslow's self-actualisation thesis, Rogers' fully functioning person, and Allport's theory of maturity. It is further influenced by Jung's theory of the integration of one's 'shadow' as pivotal to self-acceptance, which is clearly more than self-esteem. Self-acceptance requires self-awareness and the ability to evaluate the self over time.

ii Positive Relations with Others

Interpersonal relationships are universally valued, not only by the psychologists named above, but also throughout the history of Western philosophy, beginning with Aristotle. In particular, the ability to empathise, love and forge intimate, affectionate relationships is understood to contribute positively to wellbeing.

iii Personal Growth

This is the condition of wellbeing that most closely resembles Aristotle's eudaemonia. It is concerned with the dynamic intrapersonal relationship, and the ability to respond creatively to life's challenges. It is the ability to attain one's human potential, to exhibit psychological flexibility, emotional competence and the willingness to be aware of, and adapt mindfully to the inevitable changes that occur throughout life.

iv Purpose in Life

Eudaimonic wellbeing is dependent upon the search for meaning and purpose in one's life. To live an authentic life it is necessary to attain self-knowledge through reflective practice. It is requisite to set intentions, and be willing to alter one's course as necessary, in response to the emotional and creative demands of the various stages of life.

v Environmental Mastery

This is concerned with the knowledge that both psychology and behaviour instigate actions that have the ability to effect change in the world. Knowing that one has influence in the world and over one's life

experience is an important aspect of psychological wellbeing. It is connected to self-efficacy and the ability to create an environment within which the self will flourish.

vi Autonomy

Specifically, this relates to the ability to maintain a sense of self. To demarcate personal needs without seeking approval from external sources of authority and without acquiescing *mindlessly* to the demands of others. The significance of being able to live an authentic life based upon self-knowledge gained through self-reflection, particularly in later life, is emphasised.

Eudaemonic wellbeing is more than simply psychological wellbeing and this elucidation helps to clarify that, and it is also differentiated from 'physical wellbeing'. However, all are encompassed by the term 'subjective wellbeing' as it is commonly used. Commonality with mindfulness is also evident as both specify the significance of the relationship between self-acceptance, self-awareness and self-reflection. Eudaemonic wellbeing reiterates the recurring principles of the turn to the self and specifies the connection with emotional, 'psychological' development. An irrefutable connection between mindfulness, wellbeing and self-actualisation has emerged that sheds light on the precise nature of wellbeing.

3.10 Identifying the Need for Further Mindfulness Based Wellbeing Research

As demonstrated above, much of the mindfulness research is concerned with clinical populations and the remedial task of providing respite from physical and psychological symptoms of illness. In addition, there is a shortage of psychological research in non-clinical populations, concerned with the cultivation of the positive mental states indicative of wellbeing, and this needs to be addressed (Ekman, Davidson, Ricard and Wallace, 2005, 61). In response to these claims, 'Buddhist practices' are designated as appropriate for 'all who seek to improve the quality of their lives', and mindfulness is identified as a useful technique in this regard (ibid., 62). Of equal importance to the research within clinical settings therefore, is the need to explore the potential of mindfulness practice to contribute to the 'personal' or 'spiritual' growth that is an inherent constituent of eudaemonic wellbeing, as defined above. Indeed, there is often an assumption that research into wellbeing is 'fanciful frosting on the cake, a luxury agenda likely to be about elite samples of privileged lives' (Ryff, 1995, 103). This needs challenging because studies into 'positive' mental health states can procure solutions that are universally applicable. Wellbeing is essential for all people to thrive. In addition, there is a plethora of quantitative research emerging that proves the *efficacy* of mindfulness practice and this requires substantiation from qualitative data that provide a more nuanced account of the relationship between mindfulness, emotional development and wellbeing. This research seeks to address this, through empirical research that qualifies the effects of mindfulness-based emotional development on wellbeing.

3.11 'Going Within'

As elucidated above, wellbeing culture embodies the psychological and the spiritual, and mindfulness has been identified as a spiritual practice that crosses that divide. The efficacy of the practice has been demonstrated in clinical contexts and it is now necessary to show the full extent of its therapeutic potential, with regard to more spiritual applications and outcomes, within secular contexts. Indeed, the therapeutic goal of the psychospiritual 'journey' is one of accessing the authentic self, connecting with what lies at the 'heart' of the self and gives meaning and purpose to life. Mindfulness practice, as a technique that raises psychosomatic and consequently 'emotional' awareness, facilitates the intimate connection with what lies 'at the heart' of the 'sacred therapeutic journey' into the self.

The expression 'opening the eyes of the heart' refers to the introspective process that is central to the practices of myriad mystical traditions (Louchakova, 2005, 104). It is a process that combines mindfulness and self-reflection, in order to access the 'spiritual heart', which is the seat of intuitive knowledge (ibid., 103). The process of focusing inward results in a sense of 'dwelling within' the spiritual heart as opposed to experiencing an external 'observation of' it. The experience is one of present moment awareness that is characterised by a sense of spaciousness within. The process is described as follows:

The layer of sensory experience was followed by the layer of emotions, then by verbal thoughts, then images, opening of darkness, and 'nothing', followed by the rise of meanings and deep understandings...This process is very alive and personal, filled with insights and experience of the

sacred...Gradual disidentification with the emerging experiences and the deepening of concentration leads to the opening of the deeper layers of the embodied psyche, resulting in absorption in the subjectivity of pure consciousness. (ibid., 105).

This elucidation of the process is the outcome of engaging with a practice that is an amalgam of techniques. However, it demonstrates the sacred experience that can result from intimate 'psychosomatic' practice, and significantly, one that is identified as mindfulness-based (ibid., 100). It demonstrates the strata of the meditative process, which begins with the turn to the self and results in connection with a 'sacred' undefined, 'inner space'. It delineates the connection between sensory experience and the emotions, and the 'depths' of the self that may be attained through mindfulness-based practice. Focusing on the 'heart space' in the centre of the chest, within the 'confines' of the skin and the physical boundary that constitutes, can result in an experience of infinitude.

On a more mundane level, the inner psychospiritual 'space' created through mindfulness meditation is described as a place within which 'thoughts, feelings and dilemmas' may be observed in a non-judgmental manner (Birnbaum, 2008, 837). A group of social work students given the opportunity to experience a 'broader and richer learning experience', address emotional needs, and raise self-awareness through a weekly mindfulness group, experienced a reduction in stress levels, as is commonly experienced (ibid.). Individuals learnt to regulate their emotions through breathing techniques that initiated the relaxation response, and acknowledged the significant role of being guided by a trusted facilitator (ibid., 848). Value was also placed upon the power of self-

observation to increase and deepen self-awareness, and the impact that this would have upon interpersonal relationships (ibid.)

In addition the group of participants became aware of experiences of 'synchronicity', which are described as 'simultaneous occurrences' that are 'common and meaningful to inner and outer realities' (ibid., 845). This is indicative of the group members working as 'an intimate whole' and yet retaining their individuality (ibid.). Incidents of synchronicity were also accompanied by personal intuitive insights. One student commented,

I got a message I need to believe in myself. There was something very soothing and caressing about it. I got a message telling me to let God be inside me and let me be inside him. The message was conveyed through an image of myself entering a river (ibid.).

Although it is not necessarily an objective of the practice, this example and the one given below, demonstrate the diversity of experiences that can result from the sacred psychospiritual space afforded by mindfulness practice. The group was clearly meeting 'spiritual' needs that extend beyond merely 'reducing stress' and beyond the 'typical' outcomes reported in most quantitative surveys on mindfulness. This rich data enables greater awareness of the extent of mindfulness practice to contribute in a variety of ways, to wellbeing. The participants accounts of their experiences were frequently, personally revelatory. One student spoke of the urgency for self-reflective space, and the anguish of not otherwise having the time to meet this requirement,

I can't even stop to figure out what I am really feeling. I would like to converse with myself; maybe I'll meet me again. I feel like different parts of me are listening to different things, I lack a holistic view on my life right now. I know I possess that wisdom inside me. It's beyond the ego, it's the part that understands the purpose behind things (ibid., 841-842).

This passage is an insightful commentary on the person's psychospiritual requirements. It acknowledges a need to retreat from mundane life in order to reconnect and 'communicate' with the self as a whole. It speaks of the psychophysical tension and fragmentation that results when this requirement is negated. The 'inner voice' described here, as one of 'guidance', 'wisdom', or 'intuition', is identified as a source of knowledge 'independent of conscious ego-function and sense perception' (Birnbaum and Birnbaum, 2004, 220). This implies an ability to transcend intellectual reasoning, a common outcome reported within the group. It is of particular interest with regard to eudaemonic wellbeing and authenticity, as it is indicative of autonomy and the 'development of' and the 'belief in' self-efficacy. Indeed, it is indicative of a 'deeper', altered state of consciousness that serves the 'authentic needs, desires, and values at the core of [the] true self' (ibid.). Guided meditation can open the door to a sacred 'inner shrine' that is consistently available (ibid., 225). The inner voice is synonymous with higher purpose and potential, because it knows instinctively the requirements of the individual in the quest for 'self-actualization' (ibid.). The study showed that mindfulness, self-reflective practice and the intimate group support, helped to meet these primarily emotional requirements and 'all

participants' acknowledged the experience of accessing 'a wise part of the self' as a result (Birnbaum, 2008, 845). Loira Birnbaum states,

The group experience described here is of a type of mindfulness, which is primarily emotion-based, with some cognitive side products. The meditation allowed students to expand the understanding of their self, including its nature, desires and fears, and opened the door to the use of altered states of consciousness. In the final session some students mentioned they had learned a direct, authentic and autonomous type of self-learning in addition to the social learning typical of other groups (ibid., 846).

These examples show the full potential of mindfulness practice to create a sacred inner space that is conducive to not only insight in a Buddhist context, but also 'intuitive insight' or subjective wisdom.

3.12 The Significance of Communication

From the evidence presented above, it is clear that mindfulness meditation fosters significant intrapersonal communication. It is now proposed that this manifests at two distinct levels. Firstly, at the level of conscious thought or reason, and secondly at the subconscious level of intuitive insight.

At the first level, mindfulness practice enables awareness of cognition, and what one thinks 'about' situations, emotional experiences, self and other. This awareness enables the practitioner to 'monitor' thought as it arises. It raises awareness of the type and efficacy of cognition, and specifically, whether it is

constructive or destructive. This in itself is a useful technique that has a considerable effect on intrapersonal and interpersonal experience and expression. At this level, mindfulness makes internal 'self-dialogue' including familiarity with, and a 'reading of' the emotions transparent. In addition, the application of mindfulness principles, specifically non-evaluative awareness and acceptance, enable 'self-acceptance', which in turn affects wellbeing. It is possible to consciously guide this process by making decisions that determine behaviour, and experience.

At the second level of intrapersonal communication, mindfulness creates an inner 'psychological' space that exists between thoughts. In the stillness that is created through the detachment from thought during formal mindfulness meditation, intuitive insight is able to arise naturally and effortlessly. As one lets go of thinking, significant personal 'data' occur spontaneously. This is not generally specified as an outcome of mindfulness meditation, particularly within the majority of the literature, which as noted above is concerned with clinical populations. However, as demonstrated above, it is significant because it is potentially transformative and therefore fundamental to subjective wellbeing. Indeed, it is posited that intuitive intrapersonal communication can be the catalyst for wellbeing and self-actualisation, because paying attention to intuitive insight that arises in meditation increases the likelihood of authentic decision-making that will affect an individual's ability to fulfil their human potential. Authentic intrapersonal communication at both levels, but at this level in particular, can contribute to wellbeing by initiating self-actualisation.

It is necessary to note that communication is also interpersonal and that humans are to a large extent socially motivated. Interpersonal relationships,

which are inevitably emotional, therefore have a significant impact on subjective wellbeing. Emotional awareness and emotional competence are fundamental to both interpersonal and intrapersonal communication, both of which have the potential to affect physical and psychological wellbeing. Mindfulness practice can enhance wellbeing because it is an efficacious form of emotional development that improves both types of communication.

3.13 Concluding Comments

This chapter clearly delineates the phenomenon and practice of mindfulness, particularly within a Western psychospiritual context. It demonstrates the significance of mindfulness practice as a form of emotional development, and the importance of emotional competence in the quest for wellbeing. It demonstrates the salience of the practice to enhance subjective wellbeing, and clearly defines the complex nature of both. Eudaimonic wellbeing is established as a form of 'personal development' indicative of the turn to the self, subjective wellbeing culture and the actualisation of the self. The role of mindfulness as a practice that can connect psyche and soma through the emotions is demonstrated using a multi-disciplinary approach that emphasises the psychospiritual nature of the practice.

The importance of self-awareness, as a trait separate from mindfulness, and integral to emotional competence, is also explicated. Mindfulness is established as an efficacious self-reflective practice that enhances non-judgmental self-awareness and self-acceptance. The understanding gained from this elucidation will be applied in the design of a programme of personal development. This will be used to facilitate necessary empirical research into the

connection between mindfulness and wellbeing, to demonstrate *how* this translates to personal experience. It is posited that the combination of both mindfulness training and self-reflective practice will constitute a rigorous method of raising self-awareness that will provide a balance between a critical reflective awareness and a non-evaluative awareness, and that this will be the catalyst for wellbeing.

In order to understand the application and efficacy of mindfulness from the first person perspective, an autoethnographical account of the researcher's mindfulness 'journey' is given in Chapter 5. Firstly, Chapter 4 introduces the empirical research design and discusses the methodological decisions that underpin the thesis. In addition, it provides evidence of the outcomes from the one-day mindfulness-based self-awareness workshops, facilitated by the researcher, for 35 participants within non-clinical contexts.

Part II: The Empirical Research and Outcomes

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This is a longitudinal, mixed method study that uses qualitative and quantitative data collection methods including participant observation, diaries, written and audio recordings, and a questionnaire survey, to ensure a rigorous process of triangulation.

During the initial phase of the empirical research, in order to acquire experience and knowledge of mindfulness practice, the researcher adopted 'complete member researcher' (CMR) status (discussed in Chapter 5) as a participant in a range of retreats, meditation groups, and courses. Mindfulness training was undertaken to encompass a diversity of approaches and perspectives, both secular and religious (see Appendix 1 and Chapter 5).

Further empirical research was conducted with thirty-five participants over a nine-month period from January to September 2010, whilst the researcher was under supervision in the Centre for Organisational Health and Wellbeing (COHWB), within the Division of Health Research (DHR), at Lancaster University. Empirical research was conducted through facilitation of a one-day 'mindfulness-based self-awareness' (MBSA) workshop for work age adults. It was designed to promote self-awareness in general, using mindfulness practices and simple creative exercises, such as collage and poetry writing. The one-day workshop design evolved from a pilot study conducted at six, weekly workshops with six postgraduate participants from Lancaster University. Five one-day workshops were conducted in total. Each participant contributed data over a three-month period using two self-report methods: part four of the ASSET

stress-screening questionnaire and an electronic, self-reflective journal (SRJ). Digital audio recordings were made of four of the one-day workshops, and non-structured interviews were conducted and recorded with seven participants following completion of the SRJ period.

Prior to the commencement of the empirical research with groups, an application was made to the School of Health and Medicine (SHM) Ethics Committee. It was submitted on the nineteenth of November 2009, followed by an interview on the third of December, and approval was finally granted on the seventeenth of December 2009. In the interim, amendments were made to the application, which had originally sought permission to facilitate residential retreats for participants. An abridged version of the approved application, with amendments in bold type, is presented in Appendix 2.

4.2 The Choice of Methods

To ensure a 'balanced view' of the impact that mindfulness has on subjective wellbeing, both qualitative and quantitative methods have been used (Silverman, 2011, 16). Essentially, methods have been conflated because they are equally valid, contribute to scientific rigour, and provide a balanced view of the research topic. However, it is not assumed that the combination of methods will produce a unified account of the outcomes. It is acknowledged that they may result in 'corroboration; elaboration; complementarity; or contradiction' of evidence (Brannen, 2005, 176). To some extent, the amount of emphasis placed upon the unfolding process of life, determines methodology. Qualitative enquiry is concerned with determining 'how' processes unfold, 'what' they mean, and 'why' they are as they are, through an interrogation of subjective experience, within a

particular context (Silverman, 2011, 17). Thus, qualitative methods have been used to analyse the intricacies of the subjective account of mindfulness, and provide an interpretation of participants' written data, and these contribute depth and richness to existing understanding. A quantitative method has been used to generalise outcomes, by acknowledging commonality that occurs in cross case comparison. In practical terms there is a justification for employing both methods, because the 'qualitative/quantitative dichotomy' is to a large extent pedagogical (ibid., 24). Indeed, it is too simplistic to say that quantitative study is concerned with 'numbers' and 'behaviour' and qualitative research with 'words' and 'meaning' (Brannen, 2005, 175). The conflation of the two thus ensures the production of a well-rounded investigation and interpretation, and essentially constitutes a rigorous process of triangulation. Inevitably, when research claims allegiance to one paradigm in preference to the other it typically exhibits both qualitative and quantitative constituents (Bryman, 1984, 88). For example, some form of 'quasi-quantification' is naturally involved in what may be represented as a qualitative study, and terms that are inherently concerned with measurement, such as 'frequently' and 'some of the time' are widely used (ibid.).

The research is predominantly qualitative in orientation and uses naturally occurring data collated through participant observation. Qualitative method was chosen as the primary methodological vehicle, as it enables documentation and interpretation of how people 'encounter, engage, and live through situations' (Elliott, Fischer and Rennie, 1999, 216). This was particularly appropriate for the interpretation of data that documented the psychospiritual development pivotal to the empirical research. In particular, participant diaries or self-reflective journals (SRJs) and non-structured interviews were employed

to gain understanding of living through the process of mindfulness training, practice, and the outcomes, in order to demonstrate how these contribute to subjective wellbeing.

The Academic Survey System and Evaluation Tool (ASSET) questionnaire is a quantitative method that was used for triangulation purposes. It provides statistical evidence of the outcomes of participation in the 'mindfulness-based' workshop. It was not considered necessary to document the efficacy of mindfulness in general, or emotional development in particular. As demonstrated in Chapter 3, research to this effect already exists. Rather, the ASSET questionnaire was used to provide statistical evidence of psychological wellbeing, physical health, and productivity at work, in response to participation in the workshop. Thus, the combination of methods provided documentation of the process, and measurement of the outcomes, and because both were essentially 'self-report' methods, they also provided participants with a further method of self-reflection to enhance their self-knowledge.

The research was designed to encourage a reciprocal relationship between researcher and co-researchers, one that embodied the ethos of the research topic. Mindfulness was interwoven into the fabric of the research and design, and decisions were made that support an ethical stance based on mutual respect. There was an emphasis on the participants being able to benefit developmentally from participation in the research, and it was equally important that it was in no way, exploitative. This is an important consideration, expressed by Ann Oakley who discusses 'paradigm wars' using a useful gender-based metaphor to illustrate her point (2000, 23-43). In her discussion of methodology, she describes the relative authority of quantitative enquiry and positivist

epistemology, over qualitative forms of interpretivist enquiry. The former is determined to be implicitly logical, intrusive and dominant and the latter, value-laden, emergent and non-dominant. The reference to dominance is a reflection of what she interprets as a cultural male pre-dominance, and simultaneously the dominance of the researcher over the researched, 'the powerful' over 'the powerless' (ibid., 42). Emphasising this point, quantitative methodology is described as the 'rape model of research', emotive terminology that refers to a particular, personal experience of quantitative data gathering that she perceived as a 'hit and run' approach (Reinharz quoted in Oakley, 2000, 37). This approach is synonymous with a non-reciprocal relationship in which the researcher contributes little or nothing in return for the data they acquire, and it was of paramount importance that this outcome was avoided here. The stark terminology is a reminder of the ethical responsibilities that all researchers have to respect and value the participant and their subjective world. It is an argument that should not be reserved solely for the positivist paradigm. Whether collating figures or verbal accounts, appropriate levels of empathy and sensitivity are requisite at each stage of the process, and it is important that the co-researcher benefits from participation. Participation in the MBSA workshop was intended to give respondents the opportunity to benefit directly from taking part in the research, by improving their subjective wellbeing.

4.3 Epistemology

A constructionist epistemology that is concerned with '*what is constructed and how the construction process unfolds*' underpins the qualitative and quantitative elements of this thesis (Gubrium and Holstein, 2008, 5, original emphasis). It

assumes that human beings are agents responsible for the construction of their particular reality, and that objective truths do not exist in the world, awaiting discovery. Meaning is brought to bear on constructs and processes by those acting in the world, and as such, total impartiality and objectivity are recognised as unachievable. Indeed, any attempt by the researcher to exhibit objectivity is described as 'naïve', a 'first order constructionism' and as 'non-self-reflexive' (Steier, 1991, 4, original emphasis). Just as lived experience is co-produced, so is research and knowledge, as such it is designated as a 'second order constructionism' or 'social constructionism' (ibid.).

Thomas Luckmann's and Peter Berger's (1966) *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* is acknowledged as the catalyst for this way of perceiving research and knowledge (see Best, 2008). It not only brought into question, the external nature of a perceived objective reality, it caused a revolution by courting 'empirical attention' to the *mundane* 'reality-constructing processes of everyday life' (Gubrium and Holstein, 2008, 4). Essentially, Berger and Luckmann sought an inclusive attitude towards knowledge and understanding that required a shift in focus away from the solely intellectual to the everyday experience, within which the participant was key. In accordance with this theory, it was assumed that participants in the MBSA workshop would offer significant insight into the impact that mindfulness has on subjective wellbeing. Participants were required to engage reflexively on their cognitive, behavioural and emotional aspects, to gain greater self-understanding, and also to determine how their actions contribute to their lived experience. Through reflection on their social world and the part they play in it, participants were given a framework within which they had the opportunity to see the direct

contribution they made to the construction of the self and lived experience, and an opportunity to institute change in order to construct an alternative lived experience, if desired. This ethos is also coherent with the turn to the self, which advocates that one must assume personal responsibility for lived experience and subjective wellbeing. The self-reflective process was fundamental to the development of this principle. The researcher too, engaged in rigorous processes of self-reflection, in the form of retreats and courses, and through the use of an SRJ, thus contributing rich insight into mindfulness and its practice. In addition, the process of reflexivity ensured understanding of the influence the researcher had on the participants, the research in general, and consequently on knowledge formation. Particularly in this case, due to the complexity of the research project, which required the researcher to design and facilitate the workshop in addition to the other research obligations, it proved challenging initially to segregate the various roles. Reflexivity afforded clarity, and greater understanding was gained by adopting this approach. As a result of this rigorous process the researcher account formed an independent part of the evidence provided, and this takes the form of an autoethnographical account (see Chapter 5).

4.4 Research Design

The research design in general, and the MBSA workshop content in particular, also benefitted from the process of reflexivity. Immediately following each of the workshops, field notes were compiled in bullet point form and subsequently elaborated upon and transcribed into an electronic journal. This process was particularly useful during the pilot study phase, to determine the efficacy of the workshop content. Each of the post-workshop entries consisted of: a session

plan; observations regarding the efficacy of the course content; general observations from the morning session; general observations from the afternoon session; reflexive observations; and initial observations on the participants SRJ entries (see Appendix 3 for an example).

Perhaps predictably, the greatest learning came as a result of conducting the pilot study workshops. Having taken place over a six week period there was ample time for self-reflection, and reflection upon the efficacy of the content of each of the workshops. The pilot study was conducted with six people, in two groups of three, in discrete morning and afternoon sessions. This allowed an iterative process of refinement of the course content to take place not only from week to week, but also between the morning session and the afternoon session.

A similar process of recording the observations from group two was employed, following the first one-day intervention. Brief field notes were made during the day and retrospectively, and these were subsequently transcribed to form an electronic research journal using the same format as employed with group one. However, the high levels of self-related learning and the subsequent personal disclosure that the group two participants were willing to engage in, was underestimated. Although the most significant information was captured during and immediately following the workshop, there was a concern that some of the more nuanced contributions may have been missed. To compensate for this, two non-structured, group interviews were conducted with five of the participants from group two, six weeks after the one-day course, and following the SRJ period. This enabled the audio recording of participants' 'feedback' regarding their experience of the intervention and their personal applications

and outcomes of the learning. The interviews and their recordings were made to compensate for not having recorded the workshop itself.

Henceforth, it was decided that the facilitation and research demands required for the six-hour workshops, meant it was not possible to compile a complete account in field note form, either in situ or retrospectively. Consequently, digital audio recordings were made of the four remaining one-day workshops, to ensure the workshop content and participant contributions were captured completely accurately, and in their entirety.

4.4.1 Qualitative Data Analysis

The SRJs were analysed using a thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998). There is inevitably some intersect between themes, and the best effort was made to identify the salient categories through the refinement of the sub-themes, which were applied to the raw data. The data were thematically analysed to determine the effect mindfulness practices and self-reflection have on self-awareness in general, and how the formal meditation practice and the workshop content can be *applied* to life itself. Themes relating to mindfulness and wellbeing were sought, including themes discussed above in relation to the subjective turn. For example, authenticity was included under the rubric 'wellbeing'.

Fifteen sub-themes were eventually created that corresponded with traits commensurate with self-awareness, mindfulness practice and subjective wellbeing. These were identified from the outcomes and issues highlighted in the relevant literature and particularly the literature on mindfulness practice. A colour-coded system was applied to the raw data to specify the following sub-themes: (1) inner awareness; (2) outer awareness; (3) kindness; (4) curiosity;

(5) acceptance; (6) relaxation; (7) understanding; (8) formal mindfulness; (9) informal mindfulness; (10) stress; (11) physical wellbeing; (12) psychological wellbeing; (13) change; (14) MBSA course; and (15) psychological flexibility (see Appendix 4 for an example). The number of times each sub-theme appeared was calculated, and these figures were then tabulated to summarise and make explicit the number of times each sub-theme occurred across the sample of thirty-five participant diaries (see Appendix 5). The sub-themes were then divided into six main themes; (a) awareness, (incorporating 1 and 2); (b) mindfulness traits, (incorporating 3, 4, 5 and 6); (c) mindfulness practice, (incorporating 8, 9 and 14); (d) change, (incorporating 7, 13, 15); (e) stress (10); and (f) wellbeing, (incorporating 11 and 12). The number of incidents attributed to each of these main themes was as follows: awareness ($n = 390$); mindfulness traits ($n = 446$); mindfulness practice ($n = 303$); change, actual and identified ($n = 571$); stress ($n = 230$); and wellbeing ($n = 231$). Quotations were extracted or summarised from the diaries and tabulated in accordance with the themes (see Appendix 6 for an example) and are cited as appropriate, within this text.

Extracts that relate directly to emotion were then highlighted by hand.

Emotion was not sought as a discrete theme within the raw data, as the category is too broad. However, the significance of emotional development is in evidence throughout. It is variously implicit and explicit and can be detected across all six themes, because it inevitably intersects with all areas of life.

Emotional awareness and emotional development were commonly included in the 'change' category: emotional awareness refers to the recognition of emotional patterns and the need for change, whereas emotional development is used to refer to the process of emotional transformation, through the *application*

of that awareness. Awareness requires action in order to bring about change and the empirical data corroborate the notion of emotional development being a two-stage process of identification and action.

4.5 Participants

The cohort consisted of thirty-five participants, twenty-three female and twelve male, ranging in age from eighteen, to sixty-three years of age. Purposive sampling was used to enrol adults within a workplace context in order to provide a sample of healthy adults, specifically from non-clinical contexts. This target population was chosen in order to show the impact of mindfulness training on wellbeing in general, rather than on diagnosed psychological or physical conditions. As discussed in Chapter 3, much of the previous research on the efficacy of mindfulness has centred upon groups with particular health issues. Specifically, the motivation for researching within the workplace context was to use mindfulness to determine its validity as a technique for promoting wellbeing. A reduction in stress levels is fundamental to this process. It was also intended that the course should serve as an *introduction* to mindfulness and its related practices, for the majority of participants. Indeed this was the case, as none of those involved had previous experience of specific formal or informal mindfulness practices. Some of the participants had tried some form of holistic, applied mindfulness technique, such as reiki healing, the martial arts, or yoga, and some had little conception of the principles of the holistic milieu. Several participants across the sample as a whole commented that aspects of the course reminded them of other similar, spiritual teachings and one commented, 'it has reminded me of a lot of things and given me a few new tools/techniques to use'.

In feedback, another participant commented that 'the approach and ethos of the mindfulness session reinforced the [executive] coaching and martial arts training I received in the same period'. A participant from group two commented on the combined impact of a business development course (GOLD) she was participating in through Lancaster University Management School (LUMS) and the one-day MBSA workshop, 'being totally honest I have seen a major positive impact following the GOLD and wellbeing sessions'. For some participants it clearly consolidated other forms of personal development they had undertaken in the past, or were engaged in at that time.

Specifically, the groups consisted of the pilot study, which comprised six Lancaster University postgraduate students two from LUMS and four from the SHM. There were five female participants and one male, ranging in age from twenty-one to twenty-eight years. This group met in the COHWB meeting room, in two groups of three participants, each for a two-hour period on six consecutive Fridays. This group was recruited through the display of posters within LUMS requesting participants, and from a Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) course for postgraduate students, attended by the researcher within the SHM. Five subsequent groups were inducted through a process of convenience sampling.

The first of these, group two, was the result of a contact made within LUMS, as a result of the initial poster request. It consisted of six participants from the Institute for Entrepreneurship and Enterprise Development (IEED) recruited following an introductory one-hour session on mindfulness practice facilitated by the researcher. Five of the group members were participants in a business development course (GOLD) facilitated by IEED for the owners of small and

medium business enterprises (SMEs), and one was a course co-ordinator employed by IEED. They participated in the first one-day MBSA workshop, which took place on the nineteenth of March 2010. The group consisted of one female and five male participants, who ranged in age from thirty-six to forty-five years of age. This group also convened in the meeting room situated in the COHWB, at Lancaster University.

Groups three and four were sampled from a large public sector organisation in the North of England. Two groups of six people were formed following an initial meeting to introduce the researcher and the proposed research. Initially, twelve potential participants came forward, however, due to absences the groups finally consisted of five and four participants, respectively. The two groups convened at Gorton Monastery, a renovated monastic building now used as a venue for corporate meetings and social functions, on the outskirts of Manchester. Group three convened on the twenty-third of April and group four on the twenty-first of May 2010. Group three consisted of four female and one male participant, between the ages of eighteen and forty-five years. Group four consisted of one male and three female participants with ages ranging from twenty-seven to fifty-three years. This sample of nine people included a senior manager, two middle managers, operations staff, administrators and two people on a six-month, government employment scheme. The hierarchical differences within the group and structural changes planned within the organisation resulted in some of the participants being guarded and unwilling to engage with the process completely openly.

Group five was sourced from a private sector company, in the South of England. This group was the only one not to meet with the researcher prior to

the one-day course and they were also the only group who did not volunteer to participate in the research. The general manager, who acted as the gatekeeper to this group was responsible for the selection of the participants who were all operations staff. The group consisted of eight female and one male participant, aged between twenty-nine and thirty-eight years of age. The course took place on the company's premises in a meeting room on the twentieth of July 2010. There was initially some resistance displayed by a few of the group members and it is anticipated that there were two particular contributory factors. Firstly, the group did not volunteer, but was instructed to participate by their managers, and secondly, they did not meet the researcher/facilitator and gain first-hand knowledge of the research prior to participation, as the other groups did. In addition, despite having arranged the session several months in advance with the gatekeeper, the participants were only informed about it five days prior. Understandably, this caused ill feeling and even a degree of mistrust, both within the organisation and towards the research/researcher. When asked for written comments on their expectations at the commencement of the workshop one participant wrote that she was 'a bit apprehensive as I do not know what it will entail - will I have to talk about things I do not want to share with the rest of the team?' Reflecting this initial reticence, another commented, 'I feel more relaxed and open about today than I originally felt', a sentiment echoed within the group. Other comments prior to commencement included, 'felt at ease quite quickly', 'feeling out of my comfort zone, however starting to feel more at ease', 'open minded', 'intrigued' and 'feeling positive'.

Group six consisted of five senior executives all with a professional interest in organisational health and wellbeing, three of which were trained

medical doctors. Participants volunteered following a presentation given by the researcher to the sponsor-partners of the COHWB, regarding the research project. Following the presentation an appeal for participants was made, and one of the senior partners suggested the group that was present. The volunteers included two females and three males, of which four represented global, private sector companies and one was a civil servant. The participants were aged between thirty-nine and sixty-three years of age. The one-day course took place in a meeting room at the London headquarters of one of the organisations represented, on the twenty-ninth of September 2010.

4.6 Mindfulness-Based Self-Awareness (MBSA) Workshop Design: The Pilot Study and One-Day Course

The MBSA course was designed using an interactive workshop format, as it was important that participants gained experience in the practice of mindfulness and had the opportunity to explore subject matter related to the subjective turn, in particular. Experiential learning is widely acknowledged as an effective method initiated by John Dewey, Kurt Lewin and Jean Piaget, and further influenced by Carl Jung, Erik Erikson, and the 'humanistic traditions' of Carl Roger's, Fritz Perls and Abraham Maslow (Kolb, 1984, 15). As such, it coheres with the ethos of the subjective turn, and combines the following fundamental principles, which are essential for effective experiential learning. Firstly, the 'healthy adaptation' of the learner depends upon the 'integration of cognitive and affective processes', and secondly, to be effective the learning process must be life-long and 'socioemotional' (ibid.). Together these principles provide a model of learning for adult development that influences 'experience, perception, cognition and

behaviour' (ibid., 21). Experiential learning is therefore 'holistic' and highly pragmatic, and these were inherent aims of the course, which was designed specifically, to raise levels of self-awareness and emotional intelligence through the application of formal and informal mindfulness practices, in order to determine the effects on subjective wellbeing.

An iterative approach to the design and subsequent refinement of the course was adopted. It involved the selection of subject matter, experiential exercises and supporting literature that was sympathetic with the principles of the subjective turn and therapeutic culture. The workshop content was also determined by the researcher's facilitation experience and skills. Course materials were introduced to the pilot study participants on a weekly basis. The one-day course was then constructed using the salient themes and experiential exercises that emerged from the pilot study. Inclusion of subject matter was dependent upon the benefits experienced by the pilot study participants, practical considerations such as time constraints, its ability to generate constructive interpersonal dialogue during the sessions, and intrapersonal dialogue following the sessions. In addition, it was essential to provide a cohesive training programme that consolidated mindfulness skills over a six-hour period.

Each of the six, weekly sessions encompassed a theme. These were as follows: (i) self and awareness; (ii) creativity; (iii) authenticity; (iv) connectivity and gratitude; (v) mindfulness and energy; and (vi) a reflection on subjective experiential learning from the course. In each of the sessions various mindfulness exercises, both formal and informal were used, in addition to creative exercises such as poetry writing and collage, designed to encourage

intrapersonal and interpersonal exploration of the specified subject. Handouts that supported the learning were distributed, and poems and book excerpts were read, often following the formal meditations, and in order to conclude the sessions. Mindfulness exercises included: guided and unguided sitting meditations; a raisin eating exercise (used in the MBSR course); a guided body-scan; and walking and standing meditations. Each session consisted of time for personal reflection and interpersonal exploration, in addition to the formal and informal mindfulness practices. Time was also allocated to discuss queries regarding mindfulness practice and the completion of the SRJ. (For a list of the weekly session plans see Appendix 7.) From the content of the six-week course, four cohesive themes that expressed the ethos of the turn to the self, were adapted for inclusion in the one-day, workshop as follows: self-awareness; authenticity; mindfulness; and creativity (see Appendix 8 for course handouts).

Following the pilot study the researcher made a professional audio recording of a guided mindfulness practice, which was made available to participants in order that they could continue their practice post-workshop. The thirty-minute recorded practice consists of three, ten-minute meditations that provide the option of ten, twenty, or thirty minutes of practice, in total. The recording consists of concentration and awareness/insight meditations in the form of a breathing exercise, a body scan, and a period of 'mindful awareness' (refer to Appendix 9 for a copy of the compact disc).

The flexible approach to the course design allowed necessary refinement and adaptation to take place, in order to meet the requirements of each particular group and venue. For example, groups three and four convened at a former Franciscan monastery which had buildings situated around a garden that

was originally used by contemplatives, this lent itself to a 'mindful walking' exercise, not suitable at other venues. Another necessary adjustment was made for group six, whose course was forty-five minutes shorter than the preceding groups. In this instance, the 'expressive collage' exercise was substituted with a poetry writing exercise. Any adjustments were made in consideration of protecting the ethos and consistency of the course.

4.7 The Validity of the MBSA Course as a Therapeutic Process

A range of responses to the course was recorded on the feedback sheets completed by the participants at the end of each workshop, and at six weeks, following the final SRJ submission. The majority had found it useful, some in the following ways: 'hugely insightful'; 'it has made me think more about how "mechanistic" my life is and that making space to acknowledge feelings and making time for self are important'; 'team members...are more open minded'; 'it has enabled me to take a more objective view of my performance and behaviours'; 'I'm happier with myself'. One participant commented that the exercise on developing gratitude was useful, but that it sounded 'a bit religious'. Perhaps due in part to the inherently spiritual nature of the course one participant openly expressed that they could not see the significance of undertaking this training in the workplace. At the commencement of the session participants were asked to list their expectations for the day, to which this participant responded, 'I cannot see the relevance or usefulness of the research or the associated training...that may change during the day, though'. It did not. In feedback collected at the end of the one-day workshop she wrote, 'I don't feel the day's session has any relevance whatsoever to my work life, but it does give me a

few things to go away and reflect on'. In the feedback requested at the end of the journaling period, the same participant wrote that 'meditation with bells, and diary entries' were the least useful aspects of the course and also that the SRJ was not a useful reflective tool. However, her SRJ entries totalled in excess of 2500 words. This was the second largest contribution from this group, and she covered some major life events, including the death of a family pet, her mother's cancer diagnosis, an acute illness of her partner, and reflections on her career options. Also, in the final SRJ entry submitted, she wrote, 'I have learnt that I probably drink a bit too much wine' and that 'by being defensive and arguing that I don't have a "problem", I probably fall squarely into the category of denial!' Despite stating that the SRJ was not useful, this reflection constituted her entire fifth entry which consisted of in excess of five hundred words, which implies that the process was perhaps more useful than she perceived.

It is necessary to note that prejudiced views regarding the course and research were not expressed by any of the other participants. However, this account is indicative of the contradictory nature of some of the participant feedback regarding the SRJ. Many of those who considered the SRJ 'the least useful aspect of the course' seemed to be expressing their dislike at having to complete it, rather than its lack of usefulness. In addition, the participant account given above demonstrates the delineation that is often made between work and life, which is indicative of the view that work does not constitute 'life', despite it consuming a significant part of the day for most people. This seems to indicate that some people do not see 'life itself' as spiritual, or do not regard work as 'life'. This implies the subordination of 'work' as an inferior aspect of 'life', and this in itself may be detrimental to wellbeing. Indeed, it is anticipated that those who

perceive their lives holistically and gain more fulfilment from their work are closer to achieving eudaemonic wellbeing, in particular. Interestingly, much of the diary content in general, was centred upon participants' personal lives despite the workshop having taken place during working hours, and with colleagues.

In general, the feedback from participants regarding the MBSA course was positive. Most people were open to this approach to learning, and expressed that the workshop had been enjoyable and informative. Several participants, particularly from group five, commented that the workshop could have benefitted from more 'structure'. In fact, the course was firmly structured and the schedule was tightly maintained. However, the facilitator omitted to provide participants with the day's schedule, despite this being common practice within a work context. It is therefore anticipated that because participants were not made aware of the structure, they perceived that one was lacking, and this contributed to any anxieties they were already harbouring in relation to the day. Although the workshop was intended to be a retreat from the structure of the working day, on reflection the lack of explicit structure may have caused anxiety for a minority of participants, particularly in group five. However, it is not perceived that this was so extreme as to have detrimental consequences. Also, with reference to making the structure explicit, the course was to a large extent experimental and so it was not possible, and certainly would not have been ethical, to specify particular outcomes for example, when these were unproven. This point may also reflect the differences between the groups to some extent. For example, the SME group generally found the learning style, including the fluidity of the day, and the opportunity to reflect and discuss, very useful, as did

the group of senior executives and the postgraduates. In contrast, some of the participants, who perhaps had less autonomy in their work roles, did not value these aspects, and perhaps even found it slightly unsettling. This may have been due in part to the method of delivery, which was one of facilitation in contrast to training *per se*. As one participant stated in her feedback, she was perhaps comparing the workshop to what she perceived as 'similar courses' she had previously attended, and that in that respect it did not 'reflect what I'm used to'. From the facilitator perspective it was important to be flexible and at liberty to respond to each group's particular needs.

Issues regarding a lack of trust were identified in two of the groups in particular. In one group this concerned political issues within the workplace and not wishing to participate in any form of self-disclosure, particularly to a senior colleague. In the other group it stemmed from a lack of transparency and a sense of ambivalence regarding participation, as discussed above. In the second instance, the gatekeeper had not forwarded the relevant information to the participants. This was combined with not having met the researcher, and not being given an option to withdraw from participation.

Several of the participants questioned the usefulness of the collage exercise, in particular. The instruction given for this exercise was intentionally minimal, in an effort to foster autonomy and authentic expression. Participants were asked to browse through magazines mindfully, gather words and images that they were instinctively drawn to, and then to form a collage with them, which they subsequently presented to the group. The exercise was designed to raise self-awareness specifically intrapersonal communication and intuitive decision-making. The experience required focus on the present and spontaneity,

without questioning or intellectualising decision-making. It was a very basic creative exercise that was also an exercise in visual awareness. Several people commented that they did not see the value of the exercise, and yet commented that they found it enjoyable, implying that being enjoyable constituted insufficient value. One participant observed 'it was enjoyable but I didn't feel it was productive, but then maybe this is about not always feeling you have to be productive?!' It is anticipated that for some people the lack of doing something explicitly constructive, combined with the introspective method of working may have caused discomfort, and even feelings of guilt, based on the work-related context. Some comments may have been a reflection of that, and possibly the result of an unconscious resistance to participate fully in the process. However, the majority of people who fully engaged the process of reflecting on the collage, by relinquishing any defensiveness, found the process self-informative. From previous experience of working with a diversity of people using this method in the past, it is clear that by simply assembling images on paper one is able to externalise subconscious mental content and bring it into conscious awareness for exploration. Confusion regarding elements of the course and its application seemed to arise for participants who were attempting to relate the content of the course primarily to their working life.

Having given an authentic account of the work she had produced to the group, one participant explained the personal benefit of the collage process as follows, 'I think everything I kind of knew, but it's...it made me think, maybe take stock of what I already know, to try and move forward with it.' The process of taking individual images and then assembling them to form a 'bigger picture' often has a profound effect, as the same person commented 'it's quite deep for a

Friday!' The collage exercise, like all of the other exercises, was designed to raise self-awareness, but this was only possible if participants were willing to engage in authentic self-expression, which most were, in order to disclose personal values and beliefs. To meet this objective, the collage exercise was introduced at the end of the day, when people had begun to relax, and a greater sense of trust had been given the opportunity to develop within each group. Due to a time constraint, group six participated in the poetry writing exercise rather than the collage. However, this was also to a large extent an exercise in visual awareness, as it entailed a close inspection of a photograph. One participant commented 'if [Bill] had given me that photo at the beginning of the day I probably wouldn't have seen one tenth of what I've seen in it now'. This comment provides evidence of the efficacy of the exercise to raise visual awareness, which is often overlooked in mindfulness practice. It also helps to validate the inclusion of the creative exercise in the programme, which overall, proved to be an effective method of 'therapeutic personal development' and an efficient way of instituting the principles of the subjective turn.

4.8 Further Observations and Specific Outcomes

The MBSA course was designed in part, to give participants a one-day retreat from their routine at work. It was anticipated that there would be benefits that would impact upon employment and personal life. The intention was to provide a therapeutic space with an emphasis on deep reflection, and experiences of mindfulness through engagement with formal and informal practices, and to a large extent this objective was achieved. The emphasis on self-awareness included a focus upon lifestyle issues, including awareness of diet, and

consumption in general. Participants were specifically requested to refrain from drinking caffeinated beverages prior to, and during the workshops in order to aid the relaxation response, and the majority complied. Perhaps partially in response to caffeine withdrawal, several participants commented on feelings of tiredness during the day. One expressed the following valid concern, 'I'm worried that this is what my energy levels are normally...you know, naturally like, if its only caffeine and sugar that's keeping me going'. In feedback regarding the course he went on to comment, 'since our session...I have a new benchmark of what relaxation is. Probably a bit like how people redefine their view of poverty once they've seen parts of India!' This example serves to demonstrate the validity of the 'retreat' format as well as the longer-term effects of the reflective process. It was not uncommon for issues to be raised during the workshop and then find some form of resolution in the SRJ, in the weeks that followed. Awareness of many intrapersonal issues including dietary and lifestyle issues were commonly identified, and several participants resolved to reduce their caffeine intake in particular, following the workshop.

In conjunction with this, the workshops also introduced the practice of mindful eating. This was done with the 'raisin exercise' as it is used in the MBSR course. Each participant was given a single raisin, which they explored using each of their senses. Finally, they were instructed to chew the raisin slowly and deliberately. Subsequently, individuals discussed their experiences. Following the raisin-eating exercise, some of the groups were instructed to elucidate a timeline for the raisin, giving consideration to the stages of its lifecycle, and the people and processes involved in its production and distribution. This enabled discussion on the subject of 'appreciation' to be introduced. Silent, mindful eating

was also practiced for an initial period during the lunch break on the one-day courses. The exercises on mindful eating were particularly potent. An international student from the pilot study who had only engaged in the raisin exercise, wrote in her SRJ the following week,

Tuesday, while I was eating in front of my computer, I suddenly stopped and watched my food, then started eating again, but very slowly, like we did in the last course. Suddenly realising that I did not enjoy that much the taste of this very sweet cereal bar, but was rather an old sugar addiction of mine...with some efforts, by taking a bit of time, I could keep paying more attention to the food I eat and probably my body would recommend me a better diet [*sic*].

Another participant was aware that she had uncharacteristically refused a portion of chocolate cake offered to her during the week. She wrote, 'the mindfulness came checking in with my body and I became aware that I didn't want cake'. The issues of diet and exercise featured prominently in many of the SRJs. With reference to the raisin exercise and her recent experience of migraine headaches one participant wrote,

I think the whole thing revolves around food for me. I love really good food but eat too much. The consequences are very damaging. I feel so much better, clearer, more focused when I am lighter and fitter...The raisin thing was brilliant for me.

The workshops provided an opportunity for people to review their life strategies, their values, and some of their entrenched habitual patterns, including their emotional responses. The provision of therapeutic space resulted in reflection and self-expression, which was essential to raise self-awareness. Essentially, the introspective format fostered subjective insight and ensured that the learning was individually meaningful. It was not prescriptive and it allowed for authentic exploration of personal issues, which influence life in myriad contexts. For example, in one group a discussion that began with the exploration of the theme of inequality, which had surfaced through the collage exercise, resulted in that person questioning his political views. He said 'I think that's why this is on my mind as well to be honest, although I've been Labour for years and years and years, it's like hold on, why am I Labour, what's that about? Why's that still relevant?' Indeed, heightened awareness led to questions that were personally significant being raised by many participants, and although answers were not necessarily forthcoming in the workshop, resolution was possible in the weeks that followed through the reflective process in the SRJ.

Within the executive group an insightful reflection surfaced regarding the significance of being authentic, particularly within a leadership context. Self-awareness was connected directly with authenticity, transparency, emotion and communication skills,

I think we can all tell the difference between people who are just towing the party line and sending out the messages or saying what they think they should be saying, and explaining to people why that's important for the business. There's something slightly different about people who

personalise that. It's about how they see it, how they see it working...It's an *emotional* connection they make with people in how they communicate that...it's a personal view, so it's about behaviour, because the person is actually acting out what they genuinely are or believe, at their kind of core, their *genuine* value.

The participant goes on to associate authenticity with human potential, 'I guess if you're very self-aware and you're very authentic you'll know if you are in the right place...and if you're not...you might not get to your true potential'. In response to this, another participant commented that the emotional connection 'has to be there, sort of heart *and* mind, type stuff, an absolute lack of *bullshite* as well'.

Subsequently the dialogue centred upon authenticity being about 'making a difference', being 'decent, honest, fair', concerned with 'meaning' and the importance of the 'emotional connection' with others was reiterated. The facilitator then went on to discuss the connection between authenticity and 'trust', and 'walking the talk' and suggested that by being an authentic leader one gives others permission to be authentic and that from this the emotional connection is easier. Someone responded by saying, 'with authentic people you actually get the job done much faster' because in part, they do not feel the need 'to impress'. Effectively, they were saying that the authentic person disengages with ego-to-ego communication, and 'corporate-speak' and instead speaks and behaves from their heart. This progressed to a dialogue regarding the connection between authenticity, and happiness and contentment, and the difference between the latter two qualities. It was suggested that happiness is 'dependent

upon something external, some factor', whereas 'contentment' was interpreted as 'the highest form of happiness which you can get, just from being...without an external thing'. From this description, and from a psychological perspective, happiness could be described as a *state*, and contentment as a *trait*. Importance was attached to *eudaemonic* contentment rather than *hedonic* happiness. There was recognition also that 'one could be authentic but sad', which demonstrated the connection between authenticity and mindfulness, of valuing all emotions equally, and not concealing one's true feelings. The need for self-awareness to enable authenticity was elucidated as being dependent upon 'getting to that point of inner acceptance and knowing and understanding, being able to listen to my self'.

The significance of providing a sacred, therapeutic space, that was perceived to lack structure by some of the more 'junior' participants, actually facilitated some very meaningful and insightful dialogue when openly engaged authentically by the 'senior' participants. That said, across the sample, most people connected the principles with some aspect of their life. However, the 'executive' group from which this dialogue was taken, possessed a deep understanding of how the principles under consideration were relevant at work, not only for wellbeing but especially, within a leadership context. Initially, senior executives had been the target group for research participants, however access proved prohibitive until this final group emerged. To some extent, seeing the difference in the perception of how the course applied in the workplace, affirmed its salience for use in a leadership context.

4.9 Participant Responses to Formal and Informal Mindfulness Practices

All participants with the exception of group five, experienced a formal seated mindfulness meditation practice guided by the researcher at the initial explanatory planning meetings, prior to agreeing to take part in the research. One participant documents her response to her inaugural practice, which left her 'feeling sore'.

I felt quite physically uncomfortable doing the first thirty minute session...I was quite surprised when my colleagues...were making observations like 'I nearly fell asleep', 'I can't believe it was thirty minutes', for me it was the opposite. At this point though, it could be the discipline involved, and that is something I need to work on for myself, so becoming more involved [by becoming a research participant] would help with this.

Another participant who had been suffering from 'chronic thoracic pain for two years [due to] a sports injury' found the practice 'really difficult' and commented that she would have been more comfortable 'lying on the floor'. During the guided practice she went to her car to retrieve a back support, which she subsequently used. It was not uncommon for participants to comment on tension in their neck and shoulders following the sitting practice, which were 'maybe signs of stress?' One participant commented on her difficulty with simply sitting still, and commented that towards the end of a twenty-five minute practice 'I became super-aware of my physical tension...I was just aware of it, yet possibly it's there a lot, but normally I move about'. It was evident from many of the participants' comments, written and verbal, that simply sitting in an upright

position, without moving, was initially challenging. It appears that sitting still and focusing awareness on the body commonly enabled people to feel the tension that they were holding in their body, particularly in the shoulder and neck area, but were previously unaware of.

Each participant took part in at least two formal guided mindfulness practices, within the one-day workshop. Typically, the first practice was between five and ten minutes and the second was for approximately twenty-five minutes. In addition, they had the opportunity to practice with the audio recording, in the post-workshop period. Those who took part in the pilot study did not have access to the audio recording, but they had one, and sometimes two, guided mindfulness practices each week, during the six-week course.

Experiences were wide ranging, but the majority of people found it relaxing. The majority did not seem to utilise the audio recording in the post-workshop period. For those who had used the recording, accounts of their experiences featured prominently within their SRJ, and some of those are collated here. There was not necessarily a correlation between the regularity of mindfulness practice and outcomes attained. However many participants instituted change in their lives following the workshop and documented it in the SRJ. For example, one participant in week three wrote, 'I have to confess to doing only one ten minute practice this week and no diary inserts'. This was a trend that continued for her, and yet she made substantial changes to her diet and exercise regime. In addition, she said that the introspective work on the one-day course had enabled her to 'get my buzz back about my business'. In the months that followed, this participant made major structural changes to her business, including the dissolution of a business partnership. Whilst attending the MBSA

course was not wholly responsible for catalysing the change, she did acknowledge that it had played a significant role in her decision-making.

Particularly initially, some people found it difficult to concentrate during the formal practice. Two participants noted, 'very conscious of my mind wandering' and 'I felt my mind wandering to my home life immediately – to my husband and garden', someone else commented '[I] found it frustrating and distracting with what was going on around me'. This type of experience is common even for 'seasoned' meditation practitioners, and therefore, to a large extent these responses were inevitable from an inaugural meditation practice. However, for the majority the initial experiences were more relaxed, and one person commented that post-practice, there was 'no need to talk or "fill the silence", I was content'. He wrote, 'I certainly felt calmer' following the session, 'and I think more in control' emotionally. Two participants commented on their enjoyment of the psychological *space* created by silence. Both had written in their SRJ that post-workshop, they had been driving in their cars without the radio on, and had felt peaceful as a result. Following the mindfulness practices during the workshop, one participant wrote that following the twenty minute practice he felt 'very relaxed, almost feel stoned, I really never feel calm like this. I was very surprised that I was not impatient' and he noted 'my mind drives my body like I drive my car and it is not a very kind driver'. Following the five minutes of silence in the workshop he wrote, 'again, very calm, maybe this is what relaxed feels like'. Similar to the participant quoted above, this man accessed a level of increased and unfamiliar relaxation as a result of the formal mindfulness practice. A medical doctor who participated in the sixth group, commented that during the second practice of the day, he experienced 'a deeper

level of something', which he described as 'some sort of...physiological synchronicity'. This is a very precise articulation of his experience and it demonstrates his familiarity with his physiology. This was a unique response that denotes extensive knowledge *of*, and an intimate connection *with* the body and the relaxation response discussed in Chapter 3. Indeed, it could be interpreted as a 'spiritual' experience, although significantly he articulated it in physiological terms. One participant who had practised at home in the evening with the audio recording, described feeling relaxed to the point where he 'HAD to go to bed'. He reported that in the morning he did 'actually wake up very refreshed'. Other participants commented that the second meditation during the workshop was 'more effective' and 'a lot more relaxing and [I] felt quite refreshed afterwards...more alert'.

As practitioners let go of physical and psychological tensions, there is the possibility of falling asleep, although this did not happen during the workshops. However, many of the participants were very tired and many reported being sleep-deprived, due to work commitments and generally leading extremely physically and psychologically active lives. Indeed, one participant noted that 'adrenaline is masking tiredness'. This is indicative of what might be called '24/7 culture', that is, the almost continual psychological and sensory bombardment from 'on' and 'off' line stimuli. As a consequence of curtailing or ceasing their habitual activities and engaging the therapeutic process, many often relaxed to a point of near-sleep. As noted above, for some, mindfulness practices raised awareness of their depleted energy levels and their muscle tensions. However, as noted above also, the practice was often rejuvenating in the longer term, and many participants commented on improved sleep patterns. This was variously

attributed and correlated directly to formal meditation practice and other lifestyle changes.

Only two people mentioned that they had attempted a self-guided or '*off piste*' sitting practice, as one participant referred to it. Others adapted the practice to include informal mindfulness exercises, such as walking. One participant elucidated the experience of mindfully brushing his teeth, 'I really focused on each individual tooth and the gums surrounding it, front and back, it was actually very conscious...this was not something I felt I should do, it was the result of just trying to focus more on each actual moment'. There is of course great benefit in developing this quality of concentration and awareness through informal mindfulness practices, as the skills are universally transferable. For some participants engaging in daily tasks with mindfulness seemed a more easily achievable goal than making time for formal practice. However some, like this participant, were eager to practice both methods, and perhaps the formal practice contributed to this applied awareness.

Mindfulness was also applied in a business context. Prior to participation, members of the SME group were particularly enthusiastic about the practice and how it could improve their personal 'energetic' resources and enhance their business performance, through improved intra and inter personal communication. The practice of mindful listening during a business meeting was a natural application for the formal meditation practice of mindful listening. One participant recalls consciously setting the intention 'to be there "in the moment" totally focused' during an important meeting. He 'really listened', the result being 'a brilliant day; we both got a lot out of it'. Another reported 'I sensed myself making an effort to really relax and LISTEN to Pete', obviously in a previously

unfamiliar way. By week five the same participant noted 'I also, and this is a big change, no longer make a decision at a meeting in relation to spending money or long term commitments. I always take time to reflect first, then make a decision or ask for clarification'. Similar work-related anecdotes were given by two of the public-sector employees, who occupied middle and senior management roles, respectively. One wrote, '[I] had to deal with a problem at work regarding inappropriate behaviour...at one time I would have definitely been shouting and being reactive' whereas 'rather than jumping to any conclusions' he 'delegated another manager to look into it' he made the decision to 'stop and think what the best way forward [would be]'. The second participant observed in his fourth SR],

This week I've been very conscious (almost as an outside of myself awareness) that my role has changed to support the good things people are doing...and look hard and openly to make things work better rather than differently. Going with the organisational flow. I feel more relaxed with being part of the organisation and the team. I think this must be about being more comfortable with me and who I am, and less need to impress.

The confidence to be authentic is acknowledged here, once again in the form of relinquishing the need to impress others. In addition, there is an accent on appreciative leadership, and positive evaluation. Whilst these, and indeed all of the differences highlighted, cannot be attributed wholly to mindfulness practice, it is clear that it has had an influence on these outcomes. It is posited that the combination of formal and informal mindfulness practices, and the associated

reflections, both intra and inter personal, are fundamental to the changes identified. Indeed, without the SRJ many of these insights may not have surfaced for the participants, and would therefore have remained unreported.

It is important to note that the SMEs from group two, who were keen to apply their practice 'commercially', actually used the practice primarily to improve both types of communication. In addition, their focus on appreciation, enabled insight into the *sacred* nature of what could otherwise be perceived as a *mundane* experience, both within the home and the work environment. One participant, who was one of the few who engaged in a regular, formal mindfulness practice using the audio recording, described the experience of taking his sons swimming directly after leaving the one-day workshop, 'we had a truly fantastic time at the pool. I was more aware this is really special to me'. Although this was a weekly occurrence it held a deeper significance for him, following the workshop.

4.10 ASSET Questionnaire

Constructionist research is often used as a 'synonym' for qualitative research, however quantitative data are also socially constructed (Gubrium and Holstein, 2008, 5). It is therefore justifiable within the social constructionist framework to provide quantitative data, which help to validate the research undertaken.

The ASSET questionnaire is an 'organisational stress screening tool' which is also used as a diagnostic, to guide intervention (Cartwright and Cooper, 2002). It is a quantitative measure that was chosen for its established validity, with a normative database in excess of thirty thousand work age adults (Donald, Taylor, Johnson, Cooper, Cartwright and Robertson, 2005). The first three parts

of this four-part questionnaire focus primarily on organisational aspects of work experience. They did not pertain to this research study, and were not therefore completed by the participants. Part four of the questionnaire comprises twenty-three questions and uses a Likert scale to measure outcomes (see Appendix 10). The questionnaire, which takes approximately five minutes to complete, was sent electronically to the thirty-five participants on three separate occasions: the week prior to the one-day course (T1); at the six-week interval (T2); and at three months after the initial response (T3). The data were processed using SPSS software and standard 'paired-samples t-tests' were carried out to measure changes in (i) physical health, (ii) psychological wellbeing, and (iii) productivity at work.

Figure 1 below, is a summary of the average results obtained from the ASSET questionnaire, which as a stress-screening tool was scored to demonstrate a reduction in physical and psychological stress. Productivity at work was scored similarly, 100 per cent productivity is rated with a value of 1 and less than 70 per cent productivity has a value of 5.

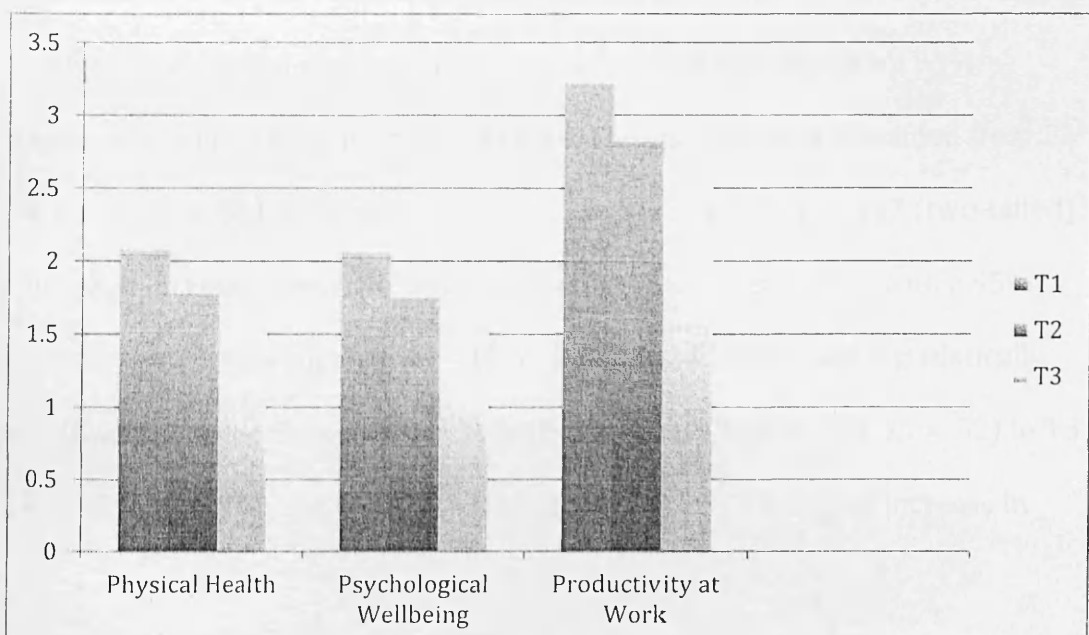


Figure 1: The Mean Scores from the ASSET Questionnaire from T1 to T3

(i) Physical Health

There was a statistically significant increase in physical health from T1 ($M = 2.06$, $SD = .47$) to T2 ($M = 1.74$, $SD = .49$), $t(26) = 4.225$, $p < .000$ (two-tailed). The mean increase in physical health scores was .32 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from .16 to .48. There was no significant increase, but no decay effect from T2 ($M = 1.78$, $SD = .53$) to T3 ($M = 1.80$, $SD = .48$), $t(27) = -.47$, $p < .641$ (two-tailed). The mean increase was -.24 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from -.13 to .08. Overall, there was a statistically significant increase in physical health from T1 ($M = 2.08$, $SD = .46$) to T3 ($M = 1.81$, $SD = .45$), $t(30) = 4.12$, $p < .000$ (two-tailed). The mean increase in physical health scores was .27 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from .14 to .40.

(ii) Psychological Wellbeing

There was a statistically significant increase in psychological wellbeing from T1 ($M = 2.06$, $SD = .53$) to T2 ($M = 1.75$, $SD = .52$), $t(26) = 3.58$, $p < .001$ (two-tailed). The mean increase in psychological wellbeing scores was .31 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from .13 to .49. This increase was sustained from T2 ($M = 1.76$, $SD = .51$) to T3 ($M = 1.75$, $SD = .53$), $t(27) = .106$, $p < .917$ (two-tailed). The mean increase in psychological wellbeing scores was .00974 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from -.18 to .199. Overall, there was a statistically significant increase in psychological wellbeing from T1 ($M = 2.08$, $SD = .52$) to T3 ($M = 1.77$, $SD = .50$), $t(30) = 3.38$, $p < .002$ (two-tailed). The mean increase in

psychological wellbeing scores was .31 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from .12 to .50.

(iii) Productivity at Work

There was a statistically significant increase in productivity at work from T1 (M = 3.22, SD = .89) to T2 (M = 2.85, SD = .86), $t(26) = 2.29$, $p < .030$ (two-tailed).

The mean increase in productivity at work scores was .37 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from .039 to .70. However, there was no statistically significant change in productivity at work from T2 (M = 2.82, SD = .86) to T3 (M = 2.68), SD = .72), $t(27) = .94$, $p < .355$ (two-tailed). The mean increase in productivity at work scores was .14 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from -.17 to .45.

Overall there was a statistically significant increase in productivity at work from T1 (M = 3.03, SD = .98) to T3 (M = 2.61, SD = .67), $t(30) = 2.76$, $p < .010$ (two-tailed). The mean increase in productivity at work scores was .42 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from .11 to .73.

Understandably, it is not possible to prove causation. It would be naive to claim that the improvements were entirely due to the MBSA course and the subsequent journal keeping, just as it would be inaccurate to state that the change was due to mindfulness meditation in isolation. As specified above, some of the participants were engaged in a range of other forms of relaxation, fitness and personal development activities, over the research period, and it is acknowledged that all of these factors will have contributed to the outcome, to some extent. The statistics provide evidence of the efficacy of the 'combination' of the workshops and post-workshop practice, including mindfulness and the self-reflective practice, elements of the research that may collectively be referred

to as 'formal and informal mindfulness practices' or 'personal development'. The quantitative data provide evidence of the efficacy of the personal development undertaken, to effect greater physical and psychological wellbeing, and this in turn supports the rich qualitative data through a process of triangulation. The combination of data shows that personal development as specified, is an effective 'therapeutic' technique that can contribute to subjective wellbeing.

4.11 Diaries as Self-Reflective Journals (SRJs)

The primary method used for gathering data from participants was the diary or SRJ, a method advocated for 'obtaining reliable person-level information' (Bolger, Davis and Rafaeli 2003, 581). The diary was dual-purpose. It was used to gather qualitative data for analysis, and also as an appendage to the intervention. In the latter context it provided a medium for participants to continue with the self-reflective process that began in relation to the experiential learning of the workshop. Interestingly, a useful distinction is made between a 'diary', which is said to contain 'a description of daily activities', and journals that are used for 'critical reflexivity' and involve a process of 'critical questioning' (Cunliffe, 2004, 421). This distinction also helps to delineate a difference between two distinct introspective processes, (i) self-awareness and self-reflection used in combination, as 'evaluative' and (ii) mindfulness as previously elucidated, as 'non-evaluative'. In addition, critical questioning is said to be a means of assessing 'possibilities for change' (ibid., 422). Also, the use of 'diaries' is specified as suitable for analysing 'within-person change' (Bolger, Davis and Rafaeli, 2003, 581). Critical assessment of this nature is an important ability that, as demonstrated above and below, led to participants making fundamental life-

style changes that impacted positively upon their wellbeing. In addition, journal accounts are particularly useful for research purposes as they provide 'self-generated' data that are naturally and spontaneously occurring (Reis, 1994, 88). As noted above, the term self-reflective journal (SRJ) is used in the current context, as it provides a more specific description of the activity and the process required of the participants, than the term 'diary'.

The guidelines for completing journal entries were succinct and intentionally so. To an extent they were non-directive. Mobilising emotional intelligence and improving emotional competence was an inherent part of the SRJ process. However, in order not to unduly influence outcomes this was not made explicit, and participants were asked to focus on self-awareness in general. Specifically, they were advised that if an experience was relevant and noteworthy for them, they could assume that it was significant for research purposes. As such, the SRJ was a method of self-expression that enabled the identification of 'socioemotional' issues significant to the individual. Recording experiences in a written format provided the participants with an opportunity to externalise and reflect. It also allowed them to identify areas of their personal lives where change could be beneficial, but there was no explicit emphasis placed upon the resolution of the issues raised. Indeed, following the ethos of the turn to the self, the instruction sought to foster autonomy. It was anticipated that the process of self-reflection would generate personal responsibility and accountability that would prompt change, and had the potential to improve eudaemonic wellbeing.

Electronic and paper copies of the guidelines for completing electronic journals were made available to each participant, prior to the commencement of

the course (included in Appendix 2). Daily completion of the SRJ was recommended, and participants were requested to submit their journals weekly to the researcher by email, upon request. Email reminders were sent to participants each week on the due day. There was a significant time commitment required of the participants to compile the journal, which extended over a five-week period. The length, frequency, and depth of intimacy entered into, in the journal entries varied considerably.

One participant, who did not submit a single SRJ entry, expressed in advance '[I'm] not sure how much time I can give to properly fill in the journal'. Another did provide journal entries but commented on several occasions 'no improvement on doing a daily journal', '[I] have not written much in my journal on a daily basis', and 'partly because I've been lazy and unmotivated to do it!' However, these were in the minority and others embraced the opportunity to reflect and found the process rewarding. One participant wrote, 'writing this is a new experience, which I wasn't sure how I would find, but I can also see me finding this very useful, and a good method to de-stress!' This was a sentiment echoed in the statement, 'even writing that feels good'. Another participant commented on the significance of the process, and wrote that whilst in bed ill, 'one big downside to mindfulness when you're feeling like death is that dwelling on it does not help (having said that I do feel a little better having written down how I feel)'. An email was sent by the researcher in response to the latter entry in order to explain the difference between 'dwelling upon' experiences and mindfulness. It read as follows, 'just one point about the 'dwelling on it' – mindfulness is also about 'acceptance' of what is, which you may find more

helpful?...And this has perhaps given you the opportunity to see that journal-writing may be a way of dealing with 'stuff'?

Some of those who struggled to engage with the journalling commitment commented on their experience in the post research feedback. Two participants commented as follows, 'it took me a while of "letting go" of diary/event listing entries and focusing on reflection, noting and detailing "feelings"' another wrote that they found it to be 'quite difficult – I have not kept up the practice'. As detailed previously, one person failed to see the relevance of the research and associated practices in general, and specifically in a work-based context, but regardless of her remonstrations this participant did compile a sizeable and comprehensive journal.

It was not uncommon for participants to initially question the validity of their submissions and this was perhaps due in part, to the nature of the guidelines for completing the SRJ. For example, questions arose such as 'am I doing this right?' 'is this ok?' and 'is this what you're looking for?' In some instances reassurance was given, in other cases where a 'diary of events' was submitted, it was necessary to request some elaboration, in particular an account of how they felt or thought, in relation to those events. The majority of participants were able to fulfil these requirements upon further request.

Unsurprisingly, there were variations in levels of engagement amongst the participants and some of them found the process easier to engage, and perhaps more enjoyable, than others. This was not an obvious gender-based issue, but seemed to be based on the degree of open mindedness and understanding of the practical application of the task, as it related to both workplace and personal contexts. Neither was there an obvious trend based on

age or seniority within the organisation. However, two of the oldest male participants, who both occupied senior roles within global organisations, had some difficulty with the 'emotion-based' process initially. One commented, 'I came to the conclusion that I didn't really have feelings, I didn't really have time for them, so I just got on with doing things'. Both approached the SRJ in a very business-like and unemotional manner. For example, one of the initial entries read, 'had a nice meal with drinks, good chat, very friendly'. However, by the final submission the same participant was reflecting upon his decision concerning retirement, and his changing identity as son, father and employee. With regard to the latter, he wrote, 'one's job/work helps define one's life and provides at least an element of "esteem". Maybe the job title springs to mind without realizing it. If this role was given up what does it imply to "identity"?' In the same entry, regarding his role as a father he wrote, 'It's great that they are now independent but, in many ways, they don't need me, in the same way as when they were younger'. Although emotions are not discussed directly, it is clear that both issues have an emotional resonance and that the quality of the journal entries became increasingly emotionally oriented over time. Indeed, for the majority of participants the journal itself provided a 'therapeutic space' within which they became able to express their feelings.

Overall there was a strong response rate. Twenty-two participants submitted the requisite five contributions and a further seven contributed four entries. Of the remaining six participants, four completed one or more entries and two individuals did not contribute a single entry. As discussed, group five was the only group not given an option regarding participation, and the only group not to meet the researcher in advance. This perhaps led to some resistance

in general from the participants, and of this group, only four of the nine participants submitted the requisite five journal entries. This reluctance to participate fully, bordered on a form of 'rebellion', and the journal was in some cases seen as another work-related task rather than a 'therapeutic' technique.

This method of data collection was used as a means of understanding how people benefit from mindfulness-based emotional development and how this form of personal development engenders experiences of transformation, from the mundane and profane, to the sacred. It enabled a thematic analysis of the journals based on codes that searched for evidence of mindfulness-related themes, specified above. As intended, for the participants the SRJs provided personal understanding of emotional experiences through subjective introspective accounts of mindfulness practice, and self-awareness gained through self-reflection. The value of the SRJ for the participant was that it aided self-observation, which prompted change. As such, it is a potentially transformative process. As previously demonstrated, mindfulness is an effective method of connecting with the psychosomatic aspects of emotion. In addition, the emphasis on concentration and focus ensures awareness of, and insight into the self. Self-awareness realised through critical reflection in the form of the SRJ, therefore becomes the catalyst for making change that will increase the likelihood of improving wellbeing. The SRJ proved to be a vital component of the research design, as well as a highly effective form of self-reflection.

4.12 Emotionalism and the Self-Reflective Process

As demonstrated above and in more detail in the following chapter, reflexivity is more than simply a tool to guard against personal bias in research. It also entails

a rigorous analysis of the researcher's responses to the experiences of undertaking research. On one level, it provides a method of cognising, but more importantly within the current context it elevates the emotional account to an authoritative level in the acquisition of knowledge. 'Emotionality' is a term given to the work of 'delving inside experience' to gain deeper understanding of phenomena, based on the subjective account (Gubrium and Holstein, 1997, 8). Introspection is at the heart of the 'emotionalist' method and this made it an ideal technique to explore and analyse applied mindfulness. Under appropriate circumstances such as these, the significance of its application as 'the primary methodological vehicle' is clear (Etherington, 2004, 31). Emotionalism provides insight into 'the depths of experience' from both the researcher and co-researcher perspectives, thus providing a more complete account of the phenomena under investigation (Gubrium and Holstein, 1997, 57). The 'dynamic process of interaction between *and* within' each participant, and how this process inevitably influences the research and consequently the 'social' construction of knowledge is acknowledged and valued (Etherington, 2004, 36, original emphasis).

Transparency in the documentation of the relationship between the researcher and co-researcher is essential. The relationship must be *authentic* in order to build trust and confidence that will elicit deep reflection and the willingness to share personal insight. As such, it is a principle that can be applied equally to the experience of the researcher and the co-researchers.

In general, the authentic relationship was established within the workshops and solidified during the SRJ phase. It was essential to provide support and instil confidence in the participants to dispel any insecurity they

harboured regarding confidentiality issues, and also regarding the significance of their written contributions. The following account, which includes email correspondence (in italic), demonstrates the process of building an authentic relationship and the openness and emotional depth that this approach engendered. It demonstrates the 'emotional journey' that was undertaken by the participant. It shows the process of emotional disclosure that took place, and delineates the gradual restoration of self-esteem that resulted from the therapeutic process. Extracts are taken from the participant's (PE) SRJs, from the first (SRJ 1) to the last entry (SRJ 6). The researcher responses are denoted (JG).

PE: Attached is my [first journal] entry, hope it is ok!

SRJ 1: I don't know if it's a major thing, and it's kind of a silly thing to stress about, but when I went for a swim and I normally do a certain amount of lengths and if I don't I feel bad, and tonight I thought I'll only manage 70, which is 10 less than normal, and I thought well, that's still ok and it's only 10 less, so nothing to worry about! Also on Monday, a situation occurred which can normally cause me some anxiety, but I felt ok and just let things happen. I thought about this process whilst it was going on and felt good about not feeling any anxiety.

JG: Thank you this is great. Please continue to include things that may seem like minor points – they are very important to me, because they are significant for you. Would you like to elaborate on the 'normally' anxiety-provoking incident of last Monday?

PE: Yes no problem, it might sound silly...

I have a few issues with eating and sometimes in the evenings if I eat a normal meal (which I am trying to do) I get a bit anxious about it and also feel guilty after (I only tend to get these feelings with evening meals), and on Monday I had planned to just have some cereal for my tea, and instead I decided I'd have something else left from what my mum and dad were having and I just quickly made the decision instead of dwelling on it (normally I can be deciding what to do for about 30mins) and changing my mind and I sat and ate with my mum and didn't feel anxious or guilty after it and I felt very aware that I was feeling ok about it!

JG: Thank you, it doesn't sound silly at all, but very relevant.

SRJ 2: I just feel a little less like everything is on top of me...I have accepted some things, how I have to cope, what things are going to be like and what I need to do (with my mum being ill from the chemo) and that things will get better.

SRJ 3: It surprised me I volunteered to read my poem first...I also found in writing it a lot of feelings came out without realising it. It was only when I sort of read it to myself and read it aloud I saw how I had related it to myself and I found it quite eye opening and emotional.

The poem, entitled *Emerging*, read as follows,

A calming colour, she looks as though she is waiting for something.
It is morning time and the air is fresh, the whole day is ahead of her.
Blue, it makes me think of my mum. It is natural, makes me think of
water, air, natural fresh calming things.

It is quiet...but this is ok

She is troubled on the inside even though her surroundings are beautiful
and calm, fresh

She is waiting, wondering, worrying if she will always feel like this

A group of other people are laughing, having a good time, they have no
troubles or no worries and do not notice the angel is troubled

I can see that she feels this way

Waiting and longing is tiring, but the whole day is yet to come

SRJ 3: On Thursday night I got quite upset about my mum and I cried to
myself for a bit...I don't think I have cried in a while because I have just
been fighting the situation...which is good to just get on with it, but I
realised after that it was good to just release, and that I had been holding
it back.

SRJ 4: I became aware about a lot of things about myself in the session last
Friday...I forgot to draw myself in my family, that was a bit strange, I
suppose that shows that I'm concentrating so much on them at the
moment I'm forgetting myself.

I felt so relaxed walking back from the session, I wasn't planning ahead

and I found I was breathing deeper and was taking in my surroundings more. I bought something to eat too, which I never do and I ate it and felt no anxiety about it after, which was really good.

SRJ 5: I have never done this before (and it might sound vain) but I went to town with my dad in the morning and I didn't wear any make-up, and normally I would, and especially at the moment as my skin is bad, its even more of a reason.

On Saturday night I had a little anxiety attack and got all panicky but I really felt the shortness of breath and how panicked I felt inside...I have never really experienced the feeling that much, and it wasn't because I was more anxious or it was any more of a big deal, it was just I sort of felt it more...aside from that I have felt brilliant all weekend and week, which is amazing!

SRJ6: ...acceptance of situations, acceptance of myself...has maybe, I think, improved my self esteem...I feel a lot less stressed!

[The eating disorder] has been an issue of mine for years and years...I feel maybe all the ideas we have thought about, along with realisation and acceptance have sort of helped it...I have started to taste food more, just simple things, like a pear the other day, and I tasted it which was nice, and I ate it mindfully.

The collage produced by this participant in the final session, also reflects the issues raised in the written account (see Appendix 11). This example gives a

clear delineation of the process of building confidence and trust between the researcher and co-researcher, and it also shows the importance of having the confidence to ask participants for clarification and elucidation of their verbal or written accounts, when required. Enquiries into the participant account, alleviates any inclination to make assumptions about the information provided. As part of this process it was necessary at certain times, to give reassurance. When the participant's account was 'validated' by the researcher in this way, she felt secure enough to communicate authentically, 'from the heart'. In this particular example, there was also a palpable sense of self-acceptance that increased over the weeks, resulting in profound subjective change. The shift in emotional state led to an increase in self-esteem, which importantly, is recognised by the participant herself.

Emotionalism involves going to the 'heart and soul of the matter' in order to gain understanding of how participants feel, rather than documenting what they do and how (Gubrium and Holstein, 1997, 9). It is concerned with the 'affective, visceral and subjective' aspects of lived experience (ibid., 57). In addition, the researcher must utilise their subjective experience of the phenomenon under investigation in the formulation of their theories (as demonstrated in Chapter 5) as well as in building relationships with the participants.

The emotionalist methodology and account amounts to a process of self-revelation for all of those involved, including the reader who should 'virtually *feel* experiential truths' (ibid., 58, original emphasis). The introspective nature of the process means that it is particularly well suited to the diary study method and also mindfulness practice. In addition, a pre-requisite of emotionalism is that

the researcher is 'passionately engrossed' in the subject matter through immersion, introspection, and 'continual self-analysis' in order to provide a rich source of data (ibid., 59 and 66). Indeed, my deep personal interest and consequent commitment to daily practice and facilitation of mindfulness meditation is indicative of this. During the workshops, it proved helpful to provide the participants with personal anecdotes from my daily practices and the retreats I attended. This provided the participants with a deeper understanding of the scope of the application of mindfulness in daily life. In addition, through participation in self-reflective journaling I have been able to gain a deeper understanding of that process, and this has also enabled me to contribute a rich account of mindfulness gained over a four-year practice period. The emotionalist 'autoethnographical' account elucidated in Chapter 5, provides a *depth* of understanding that complements the *breadth* of understanding gained from the outcomes of the co-researchers accounts, provided above.

4.13 Concluding Comments

Chapter 4 has provided detailed information on the research design and the methodologies used for the empirical, ethnographical research. It has also provided insight into the efficacy of a form of mindfulness-based self-awareness, based on the journal accounts of thirty-five co-researchers, and supports this with quantitative data. The research details emotionalist journal accounts that confirm the significant, primarily 'emotion-related' shifts in understanding and behaviour, that occurred to some extent for the majority of co-researchers, as a result of participating in mindfulness-based emotional development. It demonstrates the significance of combining 'evaluative' self-awareness and self-

reflective practices in the form of an SRJ, and using creativity with the 'non-evaluative' approach of mindfulness-based practices, which temper any inclination toward negative self-judgment.

Essentially, the workshop proved to be an effective method of facilitating a therapeutic process for the provision of personal development, which cohered with the principles of the turn to the self. It showed the significance of emotion to affect wellbeing and the importance of mindfulness as a form of emotional development that can result in affirmative change of this nature. It also provides examples of 'effective', authentic, intrapersonal communication, which takes place at the levels of cognition, and intuitive insight. In Chapter 6 it is argued that these two levels of intrapersonal communication combined with effective interpersonal communication result from mindfulness-based emotional development, and are fundamental in the quest for subjective, eudaemonic wellbeing.

However, prior to this Chapter 5 unpacks in greater detail the impact of mindfulness practices, using a threefold typology that explores emotional lived experience within a framework of the profane, mundane and sacred. This is supported by the autoethnographical accounts of mindfulness practice, both formal and informal, extracted from the researcher's SRJs. Initially, a closer reading of the reflective process and the importance of the reflexivity of the researcher is provided, with a particular emphasis on the management of the dual roles of researcher and facilitator.

Chapter Five: A Comparative Evaluation of Mindfulness Practice Using a Three-Fold Typology of the Sacred, Mundane and Profane

5.1. Introduction

Chapter Five provides a further elucidation of the methodology used, and also proposes a three-fold typology to explicate the complexity of mindfulness. The opening section on methodology provides comprehensive accounts of reflexivity and autoethnography. It delineates their connection, and significance for making sense of the empirical research undertaken, and also for providing an emic account, that enables greater understanding of the phenomenon of mindfulness and its applications. Significantly, it contributes through the corroboration and elucidation of the co-researcher accounts given in Chapter 4.

The provision of a three-fold typology enables the deconstruction of mindfulness within the contexts of the profane, sacred and mundane. It demonstrates that the application of mindfulness has a direct effect on emotional development and delineates the emotional transformation that results from both formal and informal mindfulness practice, within each of the three nominated domains. It builds upon existing theories of the sacred and profane, and expands upon the notion of the mundane proposed by Gordon Lynch (2012), through an evaluation of each category. In addition to examples provided from the empirical research, the account utilises the teachings of two contemporary mindfulness teachers, Jon Kabat-Zinn and Thich Nhat Hanh, to further comprehension.

5.2 Reflexivity and the Reflexive Processes.

The constructionist paradigm acknowledges that myriad perceptions of experience exist, and that the researcher has influence in this domain (Weinberg, 2008, 35). It is therefore important that the researcher is aware of their influence on the research process and the subsequent construction of knowledge and understanding, through a process of reflexivity. It is posited that the intellectual emphasis on reflexivity, combined with mindfulness training and a daily practice enabled the researcher to engage in a process of 'heightened' reflexivity. As already demonstrated, the subject of awareness is integral to this research as a whole. Indeed, awareness of awareness is an objective common to reflexivity, mindfulness practice, and self-awareness.

Constructionist research requires the researcher to engage in a process of consistent reflexivity, in order to develop an awareness of potential prejudice, also. The need for reflexivity in research is an acknowledgement of the challenges faced by the researcher in the process of producing a robust thesis, and a rigorous and reliable account of the phenomena under interrogation. The process of disclosing one's proclivities simultaneously informs the reader and brings to the conscious awareness of the researcher, any personal bias that has the potential to influence outcomes.

Personal prejudice and unconscious actions or 'mindlessness' have the potential to influence a research project at every stage, from design to interpretation. It is therefore important to make cognition and affect transparent. Transparency does not negate bias, but it can influence the decision-making process by exposing tacit assumptions that inevitably exist. For example, the empirical research was based upon a presupposition that mindfulness practice would positively affect subjective wellbeing. Indeed, this

was effectively a 'hypothesis' waiting to be 'tested' and simultaneously 'generated' (Silverman, 2011, 22).

Reflexivity is described as a process of 'circularity', of 'turning back onto itself' (Steier, 1991, 163). The reflexive process is described as a combination of 'small circuit' or instinctive reflexivity, and simultaneously 'long circuit' or contemplative reflexivity (ibid.). A similar distinction is made between reflection and reflexivity, the former involves learning in retrospect and the latter demarcates 'learning in experience' (Cunliffe and Easterby-Smith, 2004, 31). Essentially, both skills are required of the competent researcher who has to be able to immerse her self in the present, be able to proceed instinctively, and have the awareness to reflect retrospectively. The commonality with contemporary applied mindfulness practice is apparent. Learning, especially about one's self, is an inherent aspect of the experience of mindfulness practice, which also combines these capabilities.

One particular challenge presented by the empirical research was the two, potentially conflicting roles of researcher and workshop facilitator that were requisite. Whilst it was not possible to segregate the two entirely, it was decided that during the empirical research phase the role of facilitator must take precedence, in order to provide the best possible practical experience for the participants. To aid this segregation of roles a reflexive journal was used to externalise cognition and affect and reflect upon them, thus providing a process of 'long circuit reflexivity' or 'reflection', to compliment the 'short circuit reflexivity' that was continuous during the research period, and particularly during the workshop facilitation itself.

Reflexive practice made the tacit apparent, and thus provided the opportunity to modify the way interpersonal interactions were conducted, particularly the extent to which emotional support was given to participants, during the SRJ phase. Naturally, over a five-week period participants incurred a variety of emotions and personal difficulties. It was therefore necessary to engage in reflexivity in order to determine appropriate methods of response. The process of reflection highlighted interpersonal and intrapersonal challenges for the researcher and the journal became a way of reaching resolution. The following extracts from my journal demonstrate some of the difficulties that arose, particularly in the early stages of the empirical research:

Personal anxiety regarding the facilitation of the course:

I need to define my roles (emic/etic): course designer; facilitator; observer; researcher. I have greater awareness of my need to maintain professional 'therapist'-type boundaries as facilitator. I want to offer feedback that may help their practice, but am aware of unduly influencing them – this is difficult to manage/reconcile. I have to deliver the course as I would i.e. with helpful feedback and then monitor the difference that makes, I guess. I now understand my role as being facilitator first and foremost and as such my allegiance to the participants is primarily in helping them with their personal development. I have to do the best I can to deliver the training in order that the outcomes are the most encouraging they can be.

Discomfort with group silences:

I was more anxious getting the group to take part in a 5 minute silent sitting practice than I am when I guide the practice: the first 2 minutes seemed interminable but then the last 3 speeded up. I'm really aware of/contemplating my discomfort with the silence. I don't feel others feel my discomfort or are as uncomfortable with it as I am. I guess I feel a pressure on me to 'do'/facilitate/fill the gaps, or actually to not 'allow' any gaps, but when I do, participants often speak and make profound contributions.

A lack of self-trust regarding intuitive knowledge;

[JW] talks 'about' self-awareness, but not so much 'with' self-awareness. There is a sense in which she knows all of the ground we are covering, but I think this is in quite an intellectual way, as opposed to grounded/embodied in practice. I don't know what I think 'qualifies' me to make this observation. I struggle with committing the observations I make (of participants) to paper. It seems somehow judgmental and also I don't know how I know, what I know, if indeed I do know!

Knowing how to proceed with participants in difficult circumstances:

I found knowing how to handle [VM] difficult, part of me wanted to say I saw her and heard what she said in the café today about not coming to the session – that's me not wanting to be taken for a 'fool' probably. But I also was aware of not pushing her away. Eventually I chose to disregard the 'café scenario', thus 'swallowing my pride'! Re [VM]: we met on Wednesday and she explained her family situation – mum being treated

for lung cancer, dad recovering from a stroke. Hence her 2-5 visits to the doctor in the past 3 months, she had a 'breakout' (skin, I think), stress-related. With hindsight, I think the café incident was 'bravado' on her part, in front of her friends. We both agreed it was good to have met and had the talk, and she then felt better able to refer to her situation having discussed it with me.

My experience of the SRJ process was congruent with that of the co-researchers. It provided a space within which I was able to make sense of my thoughts and how I was feeling. Particularly through this method of long circuit reflexivity, I found solutions that enabled the management of my emotional state and therefore my behaviour. There was great value in reflecting in this way before making a decision, rather than reacting from challenging emotions that I felt. It enabled me to see my insecurities and habitual patterns that are triggered by unconscious, unresolved emotional issues within me, and this prevented subsequent incidents involving transference and counter-transference. For example, being 'taken for a "fool"' had deep resonance for me, and if I had not reflected upon this, it might have adversely influenced the outcomes. Gaining this depth of self-understanding is fundamental to the research process as it helps to ensure a type of 'informed subjectivity' that is essential, particularly when conducting autoethnographical research.

5.3. Autoethnography

Autoethnography is 'research, writing, story and method' that acts as a bridge connecting autobiography and ethnography, for the purposeful study of the

connection between 'self and others, self and culture' (Ellingson and Ellis, 2008, 449 and 446). Subjectivity is key, and emotional experiences in particular, which are understood to be 'crucial' to social interaction, are central to the methodology (Ellis and Flaherty, 1992, 2). The researcher contributes knowledge gained from complete immersion in the 'social world' of the research topic, and all participants recount their experiences through personal narrative, often in the form of diaries or self-reflective journals. Texts are introspective and include emotional, spiritual and embodied accounts (Ellingson and Ellis, 2008, 448). It is social constructionist in nature, and although it is a difficult genre to define, 'narrative', 'self' and 'emotion' are central to it. Taken literally it refers to the 'writing and research process (*graphy*), culture (*ethnos*) and self (*auto*)' (ibid., 449, taken from Reed-Danahay, 1997, 2).

To a large extent autoethnography is defined by the researcher/author. However, it takes two primary forms, emotional or analytic (Anderson, 2006; Ellis and Bochner, 2006; Ellingson and Ellis, 2008). Anderson defines the latter as 'realist' and proposes that it contributes to theoretical understanding. However, it does also provide access to 'insider meanings' through both the researcher and co-researcher accounts (Anderson, 2006, 389). Emotive autoethnography, by contrast, does not claim to contribute to theoretical understanding. Rather, it seeks to embody an individual's story, in order to evoke empathic understanding. 'Autoethnography becomes a space in which an individual's passion can bridge individual and collective experience to enable richness of representation, complexity of understanding, and inspiration for activism' (Ellingson and Ellis, 2008, 488). Action or change at the subjective and collective level is the *raison d'être* of autoethnography.

The significance of autoethnography as a method of interpreting evidence within the current context is clear. It is concerned with expressivism and the personal account, and is therefore synonymous with the turn to the self. It upholds emotionalist ideals and values subjectivity, self-reflection, and self-awareness as valid forms of socially constructed knowledge. It acknowledges the significance of intrapersonal change, as a conduit for social change. In addition, the process constitutes a form of *applied* mindfulness. An 'objective' reading of emotional experience. Both types of autoethnography are delineated below, as this research is essentially a synthesis of the emotive and the analytic. Fundamentally, it provides an account that is 'emotive' in the form of researcher and co-researcher journal extracts, these are subsequently subjected to 'analysis' that generates theoretic understanding. Analysis takes the research to a theoretical 'conclusion'.

Emotive autoethnography has several defining features: it is evocative; it represents ethnography as a journey; it is caring and empathising; it shows embodied life; and it gives an emotionally intimate and vulnerable account of the researcher and the researched (Ellis and Bochner, 2006). Essentially, it is concerned with people 'feel[ing] the story in their guts, not just know[ing] the "facts" in their heads' (ibid., 435). It aspires to 'intimate involvement, engagement and embodied participation', celebrating subjectivity and eschewing the position of the 'detached observer' (ibid., 433-434). It values potential 'bias', using it to provide a rich, emotive account that is only possible from the emic perspective. Autoethnography is a form of emotionalism that prizes subjectivity and the concomitant immersion in the participant's lived experience. The

researcher is a significant participant and contributor and her anecdotal evidence serves as a rich source of 'data' (Gubrium and Holstein, 1997, 58).

These principles are indicative of analytical autoethnography also, which specifies the following criteria (Anderson, 2006, 378 - 388):

(1) Complete member researcher (CMR) status:

CMR status is either 'opportunistic' or 'convert', the former become part of a particular group through 'circumstance', whereas the latter find belonging in a group as a direct result of research interests (ibid., 379). The researcher has adopted the convert stance, which is defined as reflexive. This must satisfy the requirements of self-awareness, an attention to 'multiple foci' requisite of full participation, and the documentation of events and dialogue (ibid., 381). All of these requirements have been met.

(2) Analytic reflexivity:

This goes beyond ethnographic reflexivity as it is described above. It is a 'mutual informativity' that documents not only the effect the researcher has on the research outcomes and the other participants, but also the effects of participation on the researcher (ibid., 383). The research relationship is deeply reciprocal and the researcher's account is considered equally significant to that of the other participants. The researcher must therefore document their subjective processes with rigour, as demonstrated above and below.

(3) Narrative visibility of the researcher's self:

Autoethnography differs from 'conventional ethnography', partly due to the requirement for heightened self-reflection and also due to the researcher's prominence in the written account (ibid., 383). It acknowledges the significance of the researcher as 'informant', and the emotional experience of the researcher is considered highly significant to the investigation. Field notes historically include subjective data, but it is not the norm for this to appear in the final transcription as a 'first person' account. However, due to the solitary nature of mindfulness practice and the prominent use of the SRJ, it has been necessary to make an exception to this norm. The emotive and the analytic have been conflated and the first person account, which is indicative of emotive autoethnography, is included here. Transparency is essential throughout the research process and a dialogue that openly reveals personal beliefs and the ambivalence of participation is fundamental (ibid., 384). The text should not deteriorate into 'self-absorption', neither should it be impersonal, a balance needs to be sought in order to contribute an emotional and empathic understanding to the investigation (ibid., 385). Essentially, it must take the reader on a journey into the depths of an experience that they may not otherwise gain insight into.

(4) Dialogue with informants beyond the self:

The importance of dialogue with co-researchers is paramount. Autoethnography is not 'a warrant to generalize from an "*N of one*"', neither must it be rendered to solipsism (ibid., 386, original emphasis). It

differs from evocative autoethnography, in that it is 'grounded in' the experience of the self, but seeks to make meaning collaboratively with the accounts of others (ibid.). This is achieved through the provision of co-researcher accounts, which provide the foundation for the more nuanced experiences of the researcher, gained over the four-year research period. As required, the experience of both is 'grounded in' a variety of groups affiliated with mindfulness practice.

(5) Commitment to theoretical analysis:

Autoethnography provides an emic perspective and disseminates information through 'emotional resonance' (ibid., 387). It also makes a specific contribution to theoretical knowledge of social processes through empirical data. Analytic autoethnography seeks to penetrate the social world through subjective experience and also transcend it through theory which is the result of the 'generalisability' of the subjective accounts (ibid., 388). Theory extends from engaging with practice, thus providing a 'value-added dimension of ethnography' (ibid.). The data gathered has been combined to contribute to theoretical understanding of mindfulness as specified below.

Analytic autoethnography is described as a 'specialized subgenre of autoethnography' (ibid.). Its merits are methodological and analytic. Methodologically, the CMR perspective provides a plethora of rich data and 'insider meanings' (ibid., 389). It has the potential to fulfil multiple requirements, including personal needs, and as such it must be applied with caution. Priority

must always remain with the research interest, but 'personal obsession' can be utilised to procure otherwise obscure data (ibid., 390). Indeed, the quest for self-understanding is justified as inherent to the quest for sociocultural understanding. In this case, the deep emotional commitment of the researcher has been used to provide greater understanding of applied mindfulness through a combination of both the emotive and analytic approaches. The rigorous participation in, and observation of the field, led to a detailed autoethnographic account that documents the complexity of mindfulness practice and its effect on self-awareness and emotional development. In addition, the documentation and analysis of participants' narrative accounts highlight the commonality and difference across individual experience that led to generalisability. Ultimately, the decision to utilise the autoethnographical approach was straightforward. The co-researchers' experience, although insightful, was somewhat limited by the time constraints of the empirical research period. The researcher by contrast, experienced 'complete immersion' in the field through continued daily practice, facilitation of mindfulness groups, and a commitment to attend mindfulness-based events, including workshops, conferences, and retreats over the four-year research period.

The understanding gained, will now be disseminated using a theoretical model of applied mindfulness that relates to the profane, mundane and sacred emotional experience. This is subsequently substantiated using autoethnographical accounts, which are adapted from the researcher's SRJ, in the form of 'creative non-fiction' (Ellis and Bochner, 2006, 441).

5.4. Experiencing Emotion: The Profane, Mundane, and Sacred

The notion of life itself as sacred was raised within the discussion on the holistic milieu and spiritualities of life. Indeed, it is noted that ‘those forms of the sacred which cater for the cultivation of unique subjective-life’ define the turn to the self (Heelas and Woodhead, 2005, 81). As demonstrated, therapy culture and the concurrent culture of emotionalism are indicative not only of the turn to the self, but also of emotional development and in particular the transformation of profane experience which may be achieved through the application of mindfulness practice. Emotion, or more specifically emotional responses to lived experience, will now be explored within the context of the profane, mundane and sacred, in order to investigate the effect of mindfulness practice on specific types of emotional experience. A threefold typology is proposed that identifies emotion and lived experience as profane, mundane or sacred, and demonstrates the outcomes of applied mindfulness on lived experience. The proposal is then validated using category-specific autoethnographical accounts that demonstrate the efficacy of mindfulness practice to enhance emotional development. Firstly, a theoretical overview of the profane, mundane and sacred categories will be elucidated.

5.4.1. The Sacred and the Profane

Theories of the sacred can be designated as either ‘ontological’ or ‘cultural sociological’, and, in relation to these, the two most influential texts are Rudolf Otto’s *The Idea of the Holy* and Emile Durkheim’s *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. Otto’s ontological argument is influenced by William James’s theory of feelings as fundamental to religious experience. Indeed, he states, ‘if a man does not *feel* what the numinous is...then no “preaching, singing,

telling" ...can avail him' (Otto, 1923, 63, original emphasis). However his view differs from that of James in that it relies upon the notion of the numinous as an objective, transcendent reality 'as a living factor of singular power' that is extrinsic to the self (ibid., 97). Mircea Eliade extended this ontological lineage, in *The Sacred and the Profane* (1957), and proposed an existential theory of being in the world that nominated the sacred as religious, and the non-religious as profane. However such ontological 'binary oppositions' are unhelpful (see Lynch, 2012, 26). More helpful for this discussion are recent cultural sociological discussions influenced by the writing of Durkheim. Lynch, for example, contests the notion of a 'universal ontological structure' that exists either within the person or cosmos (ibid., 15). Rather than a common, identifiable and universal experience, the sacred is understood,

in terms of identifiable processes and qualities of social life, understanding sacred forms as culturally constructed within historically contingent contexts... [and] sacrality as a particular form of cultural signification in which symbols, objects, sentiments and practices are experienced as expressions of a normative, absolute reality... sacred forms constitute *what people take to be* absolute realities that have claims over their lives (ibid., original emphasis).

From this more nuanced perspective of the sacred, the ontological theory can be seen as reductionist and as limiting enquiry into the sacred. In contrast, the culturally contingent approach allows a nuanced investigation of the sacred in myriad forms outside 'religion'. Hence, for analytical purposes, it is helpful to

segregate the 'sacred' from the 'religious' to broaden our understanding of the sacred *and* religion, in order to 'see religious institutions, symbols and practice in more sociologically insightful ways' (ibid., 17). In doing so, boundaries dissolve and commonality is made apparent. Personal significance and sociological influence are understood as common to both. Obviously, the sacred may be expressed through institutionalised religion, but expression of the sacred is also witnessed in a diversity of spiritual forms in the West, including the sacralisation of 'nature', 'human rights' and the 'self' as sites of subjective or shared sacred significance (ibid., 18). Elsewhere, a useful distinction, between 'substantive' religion and the 'functional' sacred is made (Demerath, 2003, 3). The sacred is the religious-in-action. It is experiential and pertains to lived experience.

Working within a Durkheimian tradition, the cultural sociological approach builds on the ideas of, among others, Edward Shils, Robert Bellah, and particularly Jeffrey Alexander. It articulates a theory of the 'pure sacred' and 'sacred forms *as* cultural structures', seeking to understand the processes by which the sacred is experienced subjectively and collectively in cultural contexts (ibid., 19-20, original emphasis). For Durkheim the profane was defined relative to the sacred, which was invested with significance culturally through 'cognitive-symbolic', 'affective', and 'ritual' components (ibid., 23). The profane is constructed over against the sacred as that which constitutes a threat to it.

Cognitively, the sacred could be anything socially designated as such, a representation of a group's commitments (ibid.). In reality, the power attributed to a sacred symbol is generated by group affect, which manifested greater intensity than individual affect. Ritual as an embodied process provides a structure through which the sacred can be experienced. Indeed, within

Durkheimian theory, embodied emotional experience is given precedence over ideology and abstract concepts of the sacred, because experience of the sacred is contingent upon 'body pedagogics' (ibid., 24). The repetition of ritual combined with emotional, cognitive and symbolic 'practice' ensures that the sacred is embodied. However, Durkheim's theory too, may be read as ontological, as it is contingent upon social sites of significance and a 'self-transcending reality' (ibid., 26).

5.4.2. The Mundane

Lynch criticises Durkheim's categorisation of the sacred and profane and the notion of a universal 'social ontology' essential to all sites of sacred significance, but emphasises the importance placed upon the heterogeneity of sacred forms and how this aspect of his theory can be applied as a method for the study of sacred forms in the modern world (ibid., 27). Through a rereading of Durkheim's theory Lynch provides a more nuanced application of the sacred and profane through the categorisation of the 'mundane'. Specifically, the mundane refers to the 'logics, practices, and aesthetics of everyday life' (ibid., 134). The mundane being representative of the everyday, has the greatest potential cultural influence over social integration. Indeed, it is often in the mundane experience that flashes of the sacred and the profane are witnessed. In terms of mindfulness practice, the mundane, which is characterised by the lack of strong emotion, either sacred or profane, can become the most fertile ground for personal transformation. Making a conscious effort to transform mundane emotional experience into a sacred practice, can serve as a way of negating the profane and

therefore, of experiencing greater wellbeing, which is dependent upon experiences of the sacred

The application of the three designated categories of the sacred, mundane and profane, relative to emotional experience and mindfulness practice, are discussed individually below, but first it is necessary to delineate the proposed theoretical method.

5.4.3. A Three-Fold Typology of Applied Mindfulness and Emotional Development

Two groups of emotions are defined as psychospiritual, specifically because they are able to catalyse 'fundamental transformations' for human beings, that lead to a shift in perspective and a new worldview arising from 'alterations in states of consciousness' (Schermer, 2003, 133). The psychospiritual emotions consist of the 'positive spiritual emotions' of love, acceptance, ecstasy and awe, and what are commonly perceived as the 'negative' psychospiritual emotions of rage, terror, grief, and despair (ibid., 134 - 140). They are psychospiritual rather than purely psychological and 'mundane', because of their potential to shift self, worldview, and consciousness. Essentially, they result in some type of transformation.

It is now proposed that mindfulness practice applied as a form of emotional development can be deconstructed using a three-fold typology of the profane, mundane and sacred. This theory is based to some extent on the psychospiritual emotions posited by Schermer in Chapter 3, although in the majority of incidences more generic terms have been substituted and alternatives included, that encompass a wider range of emotions apposite to mindfulness practice. Rather than providing discrete categorisation, the table

below represents a 'wellbeing continuum' that exists from the profane to the sacred. It is proposed that the majority of people experience life at the mundane emotional level, the majority of the time, and profane and sacred emotional experiences intermittently. In addition, the table delineates particular outcomes from the application of mindfulness practice within each category, based on empirical evidence. The overarching objective of the 'therapeutic process' of emotional development is for the practitioner to move along the continuum, in order to live increasingly from the 'life-as-sacred' experience, which is indicative of eudaemonic wellbeing.

To some extent, there is an implicit hierarchy existent within each category. There are various 'levels' of intensity to emotional experience, and the intentions that accompany mindfulness practice. For example, the practice of a Buddhist monk such as Thich Nhat Hanh, as demonstrated below, is likely to be at a perceptibly different, 'higher' or 'deeper' level than someone attending the first session of an eight-week MBSR course. Both experiences may be significant, but they may also vary, based in part, on the depth of understanding and the intention of the practitioner. It is important to stress that all experiences are significant. This is not an evaluation, which prioritises one experience over another. The objective is to gain greater understanding through an interrogation of multiple levels of experience, in order to demonstrate the therapeutic value of a process of mindfulness-based emotional development (MBED). Whilst the model is informed by the cultural sociological approach, it constitutes a modified version.

| | Profane | Mundane | Sacred |
|--|---|--|---|
| Emotions | Fear Anger Grief Despondency Condemnation | Predominantly a range of temperate emotions with experiences of the sacred and profane | Love Awe Joy Compassion Appreciation |
| Lived Experience | A sense of loss: Health Relationship Wellbeing Financial | Stress and wellbeing – but neither experienced in the extreme, or consistently | Inner peace Altruism A sense of meaning and purpose Eudaimonic wellbeing Authenticity |
| Outcomes of Applied Mindfulness | Acceptance Transformed perception Amelioration of profane emotion | Relaxation [Self] awareness Emotional resilience Lifestyle change | Creativity/Productivity Spiritual growth Presence Transcendence Self-actualisation |

Figure 2. A Three-Fold Typology of Applied Mindfulness and Emotional Development

In each of the categories of emotion the lists provide an overview and are representative rather than exhaustive. For example, the profane emotions are nominated as fear, anger, grief, despondency and condemnation, umbrella terms for a broader array of emotions including jealousy, frustration, hate, and depression. Also, in all three categories lived experience has a direct correlation with emotional experience, although causation is not specified. The outcomes from practising mindfulness are those, which would typically ameliorate the emotions and transform lived experience. In the case of the sacred, a divide is not made between lived experience and the outcomes of practice. When operating from the 'life-as-sacred experience' one is 'living' the 'outcomes' either momentarily, or with practice, increasingly consistently. The subjective nature of experiencing each of the categories also makes classification non-definitive.

It is also necessary to differentiate between 'context' and 'practice'. The context consists of the 'emotions' and the 'lived experience' and these are to some extent, indicative of life prior to practising mindfulness. Context represents

the *motivation for practice*. Whereas, the 'outcomes of applied mindfulness' are also indicative of the *practice* that one must engage in, to achieve these outcomes.

This theory will now be elucidated and substantiated using evidence sourced from the writing and teachings of two contemporary mindfulness teachers, Jon Kabat-Zinn and Thich Nhat Hanh, , in addition to accounts taken from the researcher's SRJ.

5.5. Experiences of the Profane

As demonstrated, the profane is often delineated with reference to the sacred (Durkheim, 1912; Eliade, 1957; Lynch, 2012). In the emotional paradigm elucidated here, the profane refers to those emotions that in general, cause disturbance to an individual's peace of mind. Lynch states that 'the profane threatens to pollute or breach [the] sacred form', and likewise the profane emotions are those commonly understood to threaten to pollute the sacred emotions and therefore, wellbeing (2012, 134).

Mindfulness 'normalises' the profane emotions and reduces the expectation that life 'should be' other than a cocktail of profane, mundane and sacred experience. Just as 'a drastically non-religious experience of the whole of life is seldom found in the pure state', so too is an exclusively profane emotional experience of life rarely found (Eliade, 1957, 186). It would be an exceptional pathological condition that resulted in an individual's emotional experience of life consisting exclusively of fear, anger, grief and despondency, without glimpses, however brief, of the mundane or sacred emotions. As adumbrated above, it is postulated that the majority of individuals predominantly experience

the mundane forms of emotion, and experience the profane and sacred emotions intermittently, and to varying degrees. The profane emotions, like the psychospiritual emotions defined by Schermer above, have potentially transformative qualities. In addition, they are emotions that the individual wants to transform, because they generate psychological turbulence. They may range from the highly subjective and relatively insignificant, such as a response to indigestion as demonstrated below, to those that are related to issues of global significance, such as anger in response to environmental or humanitarian issues. The profane like the sacred and mundane, is ultimately subjectively defined.

As already established, rather than working to eliminate one's psychological responses to external conditions, mindfulness promotes acceptance of experience 'as it is'. Within the mindfulness context the full range of feelings is significant and profane emotion presents an opportunity for practice. Emotions are interconnected and each is instrumental in directing cognition and behaviour (Nhat Hanh, 1991, 51). The three categories of emotion identified here as profane, mundane, and sacred, have obvious resonance with the unpleasant, neutral and pleasant emotions delineated by Hanh, who describes the unpleasant or profane emotions of anger and hatred as being constituents of 'hell' (ibid., 57). Precise mindfulness instruction is given to facilitate the transformation of unpleasant feelings, in particular anger and fear. Mindfulness is described as the 'agent' which identifies the emotion, and the process of doing so, is likened to accessing the 'internal psychotherapist' (ibid., 53 and 56). The process is five-fold: (i) recognise the feeling as it occurs; (ii) befriend the feeling, do not negate or undermine it in any way; (iii) calm the feeling using the breath; (iv) release the feeling; (v) 'look deeply' into the source

of the feeling, to determine the beliefs that support it (ibid., 53-55). Profane emotion loses its potency under the scrutiny of mindfulness, which is applied in order to contain and ameliorate, rather than suppress the emotion. One introspects to consult with the anger and also to ensure 'damage limitation', by retreating from the external trigger. The ineffectiveness of admonishing and distaining an emotion and therefore the self, is also emphasised, as is the *utility* of profane emotions. Anger becomes a type of 'compost', and due to the interrelatedness of emotions, anger can be the catalyst for generating peace, just as compost generates fruitful growth (ibid., 58-59). Understanding the significance of each emotion and their contingent nature enables the resolution of internal discrepancies and brings the practitioner to a point of acceptance. The emotional transformation that takes place initially relies upon a cognitive decision to alter one's perception, and as this shifts, the emotion itself is transformed, because one's relationship to it has altered. The transformation is integrative, that is, simultaneously psychological and physiological. It results in the 'physiological synchronicity' described above that is indicative of the 'relaxation response', which ultimately manifests as wellbeing. Mindfulness ensures consideration is given to a range of options as part of the decision-making process. Indeed, 'consciously' choosing a response to profane emotion often represents the transformation of automatic and habitual reactions that historically, may have resulted in *further* emotional agitation. The application of mindfulness provides the opportunity to change one's 'default' emotional set point.

Kabat-Zinn provides a similar antidote to profane emotion, but, unlike Nhat Hanh, he identifies the emotions as an entity separate from the self (1990,

319). He uses the term psychological 'reframing' and suggests a process which can be applied to both the problem and the emotion, in order to transform personal challenges into opportunities for personal growth (ibid., 331). He advocates personal responsibility and interaction with affect, in order to avoid becoming a 'victim' of profane emotion (ibid., 321). In addition, it is essential to be attuned to emotions as a form of intrapersonal communication, because fear in particular, can serve as a warning of impending danger. Kabat-Zinn provides an anecdote involving him self and his eleven-year old son, mountain climbing in the face of an impending storm. Having reached a halt due to their common anxiety, the pair expressed their fears and participated in some conscious breathing in order to restore their composure. They were then able to assess their options with clarity, and this resulted in them retreating, finding shelter, and completing the climb the following day when conditions, although still challenging, were safe. He explicates the purpose that their fear served, with particular reference to the experience of his son.

'What Will took away from this experience was a sense that fear could be worked with. He learned he could honor feeling frightened, that this feeling could even be helpful and intelligent, and that it was neither a sign of weakness on his part nor an inevitable result of going up the mountain that way. One day things could be frightening, the next day not. Same mountain, same people, but also not' (ibid., 330).

This emphasises the notion that mindfulness is not an ascetic or austere practice. 'We do not need to suffer with the practice' (Nhat Hanh, 2012). That is to say, it is

not necessarily a practice concerned with the endurance of psychological or physiological pain, although endurance is one of the many options a practitioner has available to her. Ideally, it is a practice that develops psychological flexibility⁴, and compassion for self and other. Self-awareness and self-reflection are an essential part of the decision-making process, because in such circumstances it is necessary to assess the basis of one's fear in order to decide upon subsequent action. Thus, the decision is not based on an evaluative judgment of the feeling alone, but on reflexive assessment or 'wise attention' directed toward the emotion and the context, in order to reach resolution (Kabat-Zinn, 1990, 328).

5.5.1 Reflecting on the Experience of Profane Emotion

To demonstrate the identification of profane emotion through the journaling process an autoethnographical account adapted from the researcher's SRJ is given below. In some of the examples provided, awareness of a particular issue is raised, but not necessarily resolved, through the process of mindful self-reflection. This is indicative of the mindfulness practitioners 'journey' as witnessed in the co-researcher accounts also. Awareness is the first stage, the catalyst for the process of change, which is incremental, but potentially enduring.

The first account provided below is an amalgam of a series of SRJ entries written prior to and during, a self-styled solitary retreat, which took place in the Inner Hebrides, from the third to the eighth of September 2011. It demonstrates

⁴ Psychological flexibility is a capability pivotal to the mindfulness-based intervention of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), where it is defined as 'contacting the present moment as a conscious human being, and, based on what that situation affords, acting in accordance with one's chosen values' (Bond and Flaxman, 2006, 7). This concept is only named specifically within the mindfulness literature regarding ACT, but it is widely regarded as 'a fundamental aspect of health', within psychology (Kashdan and Rottenberg, 2010).

the process of becoming aware of, and responding to, varying degrees of anxiety. It also expresses the importance of psychological flexibility. Specifically, it delineates mindfulness of the physical and psychological components of profane emotion and lived experience, and the value of the self-reflective process in this context. As a creative, autoethnographical non-fiction, it endeavours to be emotive and provide a narrative that is both subjective and informative. It enables deeper understanding of the contribution that mindfulness practices, including the journaling process, contribute to the therapeutic process that is central to subjective wellbeing.

28 August 2011

Since I booked the venue for the retreat about ten days ago, I have been coming to terms with the idea of being alone and remote, 'in the wilds' and 'more-or-less' self-sufficient. I have been extremely anxious about sleeping on my own, under canvas, no lock on the door to keep me 'safe'. I think that anxiety may have caused the gastrointestinal problems I have been experiencing. Ironically, it's becoming a 'stress-inducing', 'stress-reduction' retreat! Anyway, I feel more relaxed about the prospect of night times alone in the outdoors now.

Also, I'm acutely aware that I feel a need to get the retreat 'right' and that too, is having an adverse effect on me. This need to 'get things right' is a familiar feeling. Maybe even on a daily basis this affects me. I feel anxious about it and slightly guilty. I feel this in waves, quite intensely, especially

in my stomach – it grips me and arrests me momentarily. Interesting. I guess that's perfectionism! It's something I need to resolve.

I realise it's three years since I went on my first mindfulness retreat on Holy Isle, off the coast of Arran, a very structured MBSR retreat. It's interesting to be returning to the Inner Hebrides, to the Isle of Muck, alone, and being able to structure my own mindfulness retreat. This is progress. I feel proud and pleased with my work and my 'psychospiritual growth'.

Saturday 3 September 2011

The ferry crossing was good. I sat on the deck just taking in the beautiful scenery. I could feel my self relax, my body letting go of the tension that had accumulated in my muscles, a process that began on the seven-hour drive to Mallaig, when I began to let go of my fears concerning the trip. As I drove through the hills I realised how different I feel when I'm in nature. I feel calmer. I feel at home. My initial fears began to feel totally unfounded. There is a different vibe in the landscape of Scotland. It feels 'safe' and I am less paranoid it would seem.

The yurt is homely, and literally about twenty metres from the sea. And to my surprise there are big bolts on the inside of the wooden doors! Since arriving here I have walked, cooked, made a fire, and I sat and listened to the waves. Listening to the sea and the fire feels therapeutic. Slowing

down is half way to being mindful - doing one thing at a time, being able to take my time.

I didn't really relax when I ate tonight and I have indigestion, not something I usually experience, but it provided a good opportunity to practice mindfulness. I sat cross-legged with my eyes closed and I focused on its location and the sensation, a burning feeling in my stomach, between the front two edges of my ribcage. I breathed deeply and relaxed. I worked consciously at accepting it and it subsided quite quickly.

Sunday 4 September 2011

I was told today that if the weather deteriorates as predicted, the ferry may not be able to dock on Thursday when I am due to leave. My fears surfaced immediately upon hearing this, they travelled from the pit of my stomach to my head, but I recognised this as it was happening and soon resolved to accept what will be.

Monday 5 September 2011

The wind has changed direction from yesterday. Today it is northerly. Would I notice this at home? Only when out walking.

Tuesday 6 September 2011

Well! Can I get used to being in the yurt in this wind and rain? The roof makes a real din and it's leaking! I didn't sleep through the night. I kept waking and forcing my earplugs deeper, in the hope that not hearing the

full force of the wind would allay my fears. Concentration on my breath helped a little, but I was scared. The roof canvas clatters around and I felt the whole structure move when I was in bed. I had a repeated vision of the whole thing taking off and ending up in the sea and me not being able to open the doors in order to escape. The wind scares me. Do I stay and face my fear knowing that the wind and rain will pass, or do I seek an alternative? If I prove to be safe it would be a great mindfulness lesson on 'the impermanent nature of all phenomena'. I don't think I shall be washing up in the sea today!!! ...and still the sheep eat! Maybe I have to 'just' trust. Maybe I spend the day 'coming to terms' with it? Now it's reminding me of the final scene in the 'Truman Show'!!!! It's leaking in so many places, I've packed all of my personal belongings away. I need to see what my options are...

0800 hours – I hastily said yes to a nice, warm, cosy cottage with a bed and bath! But then I came back to the yurt and didn't want to leave it. I am getting used to the noise, it doesn't seem as frightening by day. I felt that I was 'wimping' out. Also, the cottage was so hot compared with the yurt. It is away from the sea and the elements. I want to be in the elements. So I will go up there to sleep if I need to. I feel better knowing I have an option and knowing I will be able to sleep tonight. I can't face that seven-hour drive back on Thursday if I'm tired.

As I walked back from the farmhouse I was amused by the 'distraction' that the weather presented to my meditation...ha! These conditions

provide the perfect opportunity to practice!! It's not raining now and there's some blue sky. Fully waterproofed and fleeced-up, I feel ok, tired but ok. I will meditate. If I can find peace in these conditions I can find peace anywhere. With my eyes open I feel peaceful...

...I managed forty-five minutes of meditation! That was a major achievement! However, I am now sitting in the cottage with a cup of tea and *two* pieces of cake! I sat in the yurt and was fine to begin with, but the wind kept increasing in strength. Having walked round the island to the cottage I realise that the yurt was so exposed, getting the full force of the (force 7-8) gale!! I couldn't walk against the wind when it gusted. It was so strong. I managed to be still in the midst of the storm, 'momentarily'.

I feel physically tired, from walking, carrying my bags etc. Unusually, my legs ache. I feel mentally alert though. That's a little weird!

Mindfulness is so much easier to achieve when I am in the 'ideal' frame of mind and environment – when I am 'sitting' formally. I put it to use in the yurt, but it was a struggle at times – my fear took over much of the time. Although I feel I gave in to my fear, I also feel common sense prevailed. I was accepting of the situation and I was flexible in my decision-making. This is good, and as much a part of mindfulness practice as 'sitting it out'. It's reminiscent of the *vipassana* retreat – although there it was my body that was an issue, not my mind (as if they are disconnected!).

Using the SRJ and mindfulness meditation to manage my emotional responses to this incident was beneficial. The journal in particular, allowed me to identify what I was feeling. It enabled an invaluable form of intrapersonal dialogue, through which it was possible to assess the situation, how I was feeling, and reach decisions based upon this information. It meant that I did not react 'involuntarily' from fear, but instead was able to make an informed decision. Formal meditation was used to cope directly with the fear that arose, but was only effective to a limited extent. Unusually, the arousal of the 'fight or flight' response was based on a situation that posed a physical threat as opposed to a purely psychological threat. There was value in being able to distinguish the difference between the two types of threat, and take appropriate action based upon this insight. Psychological flexibility pertains to acceptance and one's response. In this scenario, that included self-acceptance, and not judging my self or feeling defeated or guilty, as a result of exiting the yurt.

Thursday 8 September 2011

I went to bed last night with an inexplicable anxiousness. For the first time since being here I was anxious about being alone. A few times I imagined someone climbing through the kitchen window. I closed it. Then I was too warm. I opened it. I then started having anxiety-provoking dreams, I kept waking, and the dreams became more graphic and disconcerting. It was very unsettling.

I meditated from 0600 until 0700 and despite all of the above, I settled into it easily. I was very aware of my intensified and quickened heartbeat.

This is the way I am able to monitor my emotional state. I became aware of holding my breath. I focused on my heart and soon the intensity subsided, but it was still stronger than it normally is. I was aware of my shoulders feeling tense and tight (I haven't experienced this in a long time), my neck too. The tension definitely built over the course of the night.

On reflection, the slight paranoia at bedtime reflected my (unconscious, for sure) anxiety about going home and some anxiety about the uncertainty of getting off the island. It's the uncertainty that's anxiety provoking. I haven't given my thesis (the task of writing my thesis) any real consideration while I've been here. I've been absorbed in this reflective journal, my practice, and adapting to the yurt and island life. However, I feel that is the root cause of my anxiety – going back to the writing, the 'work'. And yet when I reflect, the process is demanding and very challenging, but immensely satisfying, rewarding, and enjoyable. It conjures up a cocktail of emotions, as does so much of life.

I contrast the past twelve hours with the period before I left home to come to Muck, I remember thinking how totally calm I was. I had a great night's sleep the night before I drove up here. I went to bed at 2000 hours and slept till 0330. I only woke once. I remember thinking how unusual that was for me, because most times when I am headed into the unknown and particularly when faced with a long journey, my sleep pattern reflects my emotional turbulence.

Taking time out has helped me to become more conscious/aware/mindful of how my emotional state affects me when I'm at home and working. I can see the intensity and the effect that it has on my mind and body. I need to take more care of myself, to meditate daily again. Since May, I have let my practice slide. I now realise how stressed and anxious I had become. When I meditate regularly I take for granted to some extent, how calm I feel.

Friday 9 September

A seven-hour drive home last night. Soon after I got in my car and started driving I became aware of my impatience with other drivers – hilarious! I saw the funny side of it and relaxed into the drive. I was impatient to complete as much of the journey as possible before it went dark. The last hour was challenging. I drove happily in silence until then, which is unusual for me on a long trip.

Saturday 10 September 2011

Anxiousness on waking, it feels too familiar. I had an anxiety-provoking dream about being unable to drive a car. I'm going for a walk that should calm me down.

Sunday 11 September 2011

I feel more settled, more acclimatised to my life at home. I am feeling less anxious – the transition (any transition) takes time. This is a valuable lesson I have learnt from my immersion in mindfulness teachings.

A heightened awareness of self and environment resulted from living mindfully and at a slower pace than usual. There was great value in having the time to reflect on my behaviour and emotional state, to realise how ephemeral emotional states are, and how easily they are affected by my thoughts and external, environmental factors. The heightened awareness enabled me to become ‘conscious’ of phenomena and the effects they have on me. Under ‘normal’ circumstances I suspect that my behaviour is commonly swayed ‘unconsciously’ by the myriad emotions that arise during the course of lived experience. This retreat, unlike the others I have attended, did not adhere to a pre-determined schedule and therefore provided the time required to gain emotional understanding of the intellectual knowledge, previously gained.

The objective to engage in informal mindfulness practice supported the SRJ practice, which enabled greater emotional awareness. Completing the SRJ proved to be a valuable adjunct to formal meditation. The process of writing was cathartic, a form of authentic expressivity that made emotions transparent. Taking time to express and reflect upon personal concerns in writing became a method of observing the effects of high and low-level fear and anxieties. It was interesting to observe my self and become aware of the less obvious anxieties which are undoubtedly present on a daily basis, and gain understanding of how they impact upon lived experience, for example, on my sleep pattern. Through mindfulness *and* self-reflection it was possible to see the direct correlation

between thoughts, emotions and lived experience, and how lived experience fluctuates along the emotional continuum, between the sacred, mundane and profane.

This account does more than simply exemplify the experience of profane emotion. It demonstrates the subtle similarities and differences that exist between mindfulness and self-awareness, and it shows that formal and informal mindfulness practices lead to greater self-awareness. Mindfulness is a means of raising awareness in *general*, and self-awareness in *particular*. As demonstrated, self-awareness is the catalyst for initiating change that can result in a better quality of lived 'emotional' experience. It is also requisite for emotional intelligence, and the emotional equanimity that is requisite for improved wellbeing. The account, which is a demonstration of acute self-awareness, is also infused with the qualities of mindfulness. It shows that concentration is focused on the self through mindfulness and self-reflection, and that negative self-judgment, which is often a consequence of 'self-awareness', is audibly minimised. A compassionate attitude is brought to bear on the self and the circumstances. Curiosity is applied to anxiety and there is openness to exploration of the issues rather than a dogmatic and unhelpful, absolute judgment. The combination of mindfulness, self-reflection and self-awareness is greater than the sum of its parts. Indeed, this 'trinitarian' approach to personal development is indicative of the turn to the self, in that it fosters qualities of the 'turn', such as personal responsibility, authenticity, expressivity and compassion.

5.5.2. Applied Mindfulness: Transforming Profane Experience

The example given above shows the significance of living mindfully and at a reduced pace. It also delineates the significance of self-reflection in raising awareness of profane emotion. By contrast, the next example demonstrates the efficacy of mindfulness practice to *transform* the profane, not only psychological anxiety, but also physical pain.

Vipassana Retreat: Dhamma Dipa Centre, Herefordshire, 24 March – 4 April
2009⁵

On about day five, I became gripped with an intense fear that I was about to contract ‘the cough’, which was circulating around the one hundred, otherwise silent participants. I was struggling with bodily discomfort from the intense meditation practice and sitting cross-legged for up to ten hours per day, and the thought of having sub-optimal health saw my fear shift into overdrive. Around suppertime I began to feel *spaced out*, strangely disconnected from reality, I think, as a result of the anxiety. I talked with one of the housekeepers who suggested that I would benefit from an audience with the female teacher. As I walked the path to the teacher’s residence an hour later, I was struck by a wave of relief, and release from the intense grip of my fear, and as that began to dissipate, I began to feel better. Amazingly, the transformation within my body and mind began before I came into contact with the teacher. Just the thought of going to discuss how I felt initiated a tangible shift.

⁵ The SRJ from the *vipassana* retreat was compiled post-retreat. The decision was made to experience the retreat as recommended, without the adjunct of reading or writing materials.

The teacher listened to my anxieties. I also provided an account of what had been a blissful experience, of being engulfed in light during meditation the previous day. She explained that a joyful experience of the type I had experienced is always followed by a profane emotional experience, and that's where I was right now.

In addition, the teacher gave me instruction that enabled me to deal with the pain I experienced in my hips during the meditation sessions. She directed me to take my awareness into the hip region, the place where I was experiencing the most discomfort, to investigate with openness and curiosity the exact nature of the feelings and sensations, and to identify the location, precisely. I carried out her instruction during the next meditation session. I became mindful of the pain and began to explore it with non-evaluative awareness. My attention went deeper into my body, and try as I might I could not locate anything that represented the pain. As I investigated and felt I was getting closer to the source of the pain, it eluded me and dissipated. This procedure was carried out several times until I experienced a moment of complete release from the physical pain. It was as though someone had flipped a switch and in that instant the pain vanished and my consciousness simultaneously expanded. It was as though I was held in an embrace of infinite bright light, held in the cross-legged position. I felt I would be able to maintain this position indefinitely. The feeling was sublime and I felt as though my whole being was 'beaming'.

As with the previous account, release from suffering, both physical and psychological, resulted from 'expressing' the concerns I had about my self. The intervention of the housekeeper and her perception that I required assistance to make sense of my experience was pivotal to the change. The teacher offered reassurance and enabled me to understand that my experiences, 'good' and 'bad', were simply examples of the impermanent nature of all phenomena, a conclusion that I may have reached myself, had I kept an SRJ.

Being able to transform my physical pain in this way was astonishing. I had previous experience of 'hands-on healing, mine and others, to relieve physical suffering, and I had also 'realised' the ability to ameliorate headaches in my self through sustained concentration on the pain, but I had not experienced such an instantaneous result at any other time. Earlier in the week I had suffered with back pain and resolved that I needed to access greater emotional strength to deal with it. When I consulted the teacher the first time, she had agreed that 'sitting and suffering' could be detrimental to practice. As detailed above, during the second consultation she gave me specific instructions that enabled me to transform the pain. The teacher was empathetic and provided appropriate practical solutions as required and she explained the need for psychological flexibility. The *vipassana* retreat, and these incidents in particular, strengthened my understanding of the extent to which psyche and soma are interconnected and how it is possible to ameliorate profane physical experience through the application of focus, concentration, acceptance, and compassion. The retreat demonstrated the significance of disciplined practice and also highlighted the necessity to balance this with self-compassion. The teacher also gave me a

template for compassionate interpersonal communication in the facilitator/practitioner relationship.

The examples given so far, show a range of applications for mindfulness practice. The first example given above, documents the experience of dealing with anxiety that stems from 'fear of the unknown', the second provides an example of transforming physical pain, and the last example given below, delineates the process of dealing with anger that arose during interpersonal communication. The latter occurred within my daily life and provides an example of how the meditation technique can be effectively applied to transform profane emotion. In addition, it reiterates the usefulness of the SRJ for post-incident enquiry and as a method of 'sense making'.

Saturday 3 March 2012

Last night I was *so* angry – I can't remember being that angry for a long time. I was so angry I couldn't respond. The deep hurt of broken trust. Am I prepared to really let go and be with what is?

When I arrived home last night I sat and practised for an hour and just kept coming back to my breath...I used the 'mantra' '*breathing in, I know I am breathing in, breathing out, I know I am breathing out...*' in time, this simply became '*breathing in, breathing out*' – but those words contained the whole sentence. My mind wandered back to my anger and the intricacies of the 'issues' (I didn't mean to put an 's'!) but I did well to come back to the breath. I felt calm, really calm, during the meditation – my anger dissipated, completely dissolved. And by the time the bell went

to signify the end of the hour, it (I) was completely transformed. To go from 'door-slamming angry' to calm in two hours was amazing.

This morning and last night to some extent, I have been 'looking deeply' at my anger – and it is MY anger! And I have been looking deeply at what [the other person] said. I see through it. I saw the visual and spoken clues and I am mindful that I didn't react. I woke this morning and started to look again, and became frustrated – there are major power issues going on. Anyway, this morning I have found it easy to be mindful, be with the washing up, this writing, my breakfast. It felt good and calming. I brought my mind from anger and frustration, to the present, and calm. Looking deeply has helped me to develop compassion for the other person and myself. I really can see the hurt and the insecurities that have led [this person] to these actions, and I can see why it has triggered this intense feeling of anger in me. It has triggered much deeper issues between us, from the past. Understanding all of that helps me to accept what has happened, but it doesn't make [the other person's] actions ethical.

This account demonstrates the direct application of mindfulness practice and the efficacy of concentration on the breath in particular, to transform profane emotion. 'If we follow our breathing closely while we identify and mindfully observe our anger, it can no longer monopolize our consciousness' (Nhat Hanh, 1991, 57). The anger was intense and yet within approximately thirty minutes of concentrating on the breath, it had completely dissipated. Prior to making the decision to sit and practise mindfulness I had been prowling, enraged, unable to

settle, not knowing what to 'do' with my self. The option to sit and practice did not occur immediately upon my return home but within five or ten minutes, and then it felt as though there was no other option. I knew what I needed to do. It was not an immediate response, but it was automatic, borne of almost four years of mindfulness practice. I did not engage in writing until the following morning, and so whilst this enabled me to analyse the underlying issues in retrospect, it did not contribute to the dissipation of the anger itself, the practice was responsible for that. I had considered my self 'too angry to respond' at the time of the incident, but upon reflection. There was probably an element of being mindful, aware that if I had spoken I would have said things that would have amplified the situation. Indeed, the mindful method of dealing with anger is to refrain from thinking about the other person, to 'refrain from doing or saying anything as long as our anger persists' in order to 'avoid doing any damage that we may later regret' (ibid., 58). This issue persisted over a period of three weeks, and each time it re-emerged I became aware that if I were to engage in a discussion it would probably have destroyed that relationship, which is actually very important to me. I consciously prevented my self from being 'hooked' into an argument and the relationship gradually began to improve. A couple of weeks later I was able to calmly state how it had made me feel. The process of applying mindfulness to 'look deeply' into my motives and insecurities, and the other person's, enabled me to make sense of why the person's actions had created an 'issue'. Consequently, as I gained greater understanding of the dynamics of the issue, I was able to develop compassion. The following passage explicates this process and the outcomes.

The essence of love and compassion is understanding, the ability to recognize the physical, material, and psychological suffering of others, to put ourselves “inside the skin” of the other...Compassion means, literally, “to suffer with”...We do not need the other person to be present in order to bring about reconciliation. When we look deeply we become reconciled with ourselves, and, for us, the problem no longer exists. Sooner or later, he [*sic*] will see our attitude and will share in the freshness of the stream of love which is flowing naturally from our heart (ibid., 81 – 83).

I witnessed this ‘heart’ connection when I calmly expressed how their actions had undermined our relationship and saw it ‘register’ in the other person too, as their defensiveness completely crumbled. This example demonstrates the efficacy of the sacred emotions to ameliorate the profane. Although I was unable to apply sacred emotions directly, at the height of the situation, I did respond mindfully. The process encompassed three stages: distancing myself physically from the other person; meditative concentration on the breath; and reflective analysis to reason through the sequence of events and their underlying causes. The attainment of intellectual understanding was paramount to the process of acceptance and resolution. This underlines the importance of reflexivity and demonstrates the complexity of the process that leads to acceptance. In the weeks that followed this incident, I made a concerted effort to develop compassion, and through authentic dialogue with the other person, it became possible to transform how I *felt*.

5.6 Experiences of the Sacred

The sacred is not necessarily 'religious', in that it is essentially that which holds personal significance, is inviolable and sacrosanct. As demonstrated, mindfulness is historically a Buddhist practice and therefore has religious affiliation.

However, it is also used increasingly as a 'secular' *therapeutic* intervention. As previously explicated, 'the therapeutic paradigm' crosses the divide between the secular and the spiritual. Indeed, in the context of mindfulness practice, it is not possible to segregate the two as the 'spiritual' nature of the practice, particularly the underlying ethics, inevitably informs the practice, even in a 'secular' context. Elements of the phenomenon and its practice are elucidated below using further autoethnographical accounts, in order to elucidate the sacred nature of mindfulness and its practice.

5.6.1 The 'Sacred Significance' of Mindfulness and its Practice

The experience of life as sacred is reflected in the Buddhist concept of 'beginner's mind', which is described as an awakened state of 'pure love', for the socioemotional experiences of life (Kabat-Zinn, 2005, 85 and 84). The beginner's mind is likened to a state of 'childlike wonder' that apprehends every experience as though perceived for the first time, with unbiased curiosity. This attitude is fundamental to mindfulness practice. In theory, every time the practitioner takes to the meditation cushion he or she must experience the breath anew, for example, with an appropriate level of renewed curiosity. Informal practices too, can be approached in this way, and the most 'mundane' of tasks such as washing the dishes, can become practice. Zen monk Thich Nhat Hanh explains, 'I enjoy taking my time with each dish, being fully aware of the dish, the water, and each movement of my hands' (1991, 26). When executed and explicated in this way,

the task of washing dishes obviously becomes a sacred practice, based on the understanding that 'the dishes themselves and the fact that I am here washing them are miracles!' (ibid.). As elucidated below, the ability to perceive 'mundane' experience in this way is an essential mindfulness practice. With this unbiased perception, every encounter becomes an opportunity to practice, and practice is never 'mundane', because every experience is potentially sacred.

Through the requisite shift in perspective 'physiological functions' such as eating, walking and showering, can each be viewed as 'sacraments' (Eliade, 1957, 170). Essentially, there is a metaphorical 'threshold', a turning point that exists somewhere between the mundane and the sacred realm of experience (ibid., 26). The threshold may be encountered in a 'religious' space such as a temple, or in a 'secular' environment such as a workshop. Equally it can be experienced in a practice such as the washing of dishes, because perception is fundamentally transformed through subjective, ritualised, experience. Sacred experience may take place within social contexts, but ultimately it is an inner *emotional* experience, of personal signification. Transformation takes place individually and emotionally, both physiologically and psychologically.

Understood to function in this way, the personal practice, and by association the body as a 'site' of transformation, is the threshold. Therefore, mindfulness with its focus on the present moment can be used as a method to enable the requisite shift in perception from the mundane and also the profane, to the sphere of sacred, *emotional*, and therefore *embodied* experience. When lived mindfully, life 'in general' including one's embodied self and experience, becomes a potential source of appreciation and joy, and therefore by the current definition, sacred. Indeed, 'if we're really engaged in mindfulness... we will

consider the act of each step we take as an infinite wonder, and a joy will open our hearts like a flower' (Nhat Hanh, 1975, 12). Ultimately, 'each thought, each action in the sunlight of awareness becomes sacred. In this light, no boundary exists between the sacred and the profane...I live fully in every moment, and I am happy' (ibid., 27). The understanding and experience of 'life as sacred' through the application of mindfulness, is therefore a route to wellbeing.

As elucidated above, the identification of mindfulness as a sacred practice is determined in part by the motivation or intention that underlies it. When practice is undertaken *intentionally* with the objective of creating some form of transformation, either personal or collective, it assumes a sacred significance for the practitioner. In addition, the identification of the practice as sacred is determined by the 'lived experience' that results from the practice. According to the three-fold typology, in this category the lived experience and the outcomes from practice are synonymous. One 'lives' the sacred 'outcomes' of mindfulness practice, and experiences the allied emotions of love, awe and wonder, joy, compassion, and appreciation.

Within the category of the sacred in particular, emotional transformation is 'cyclical' as well as 'hierarchical'. Life lived increasingly, or predominantly, from the sacred paradigm creates a 'positive' momentum. Sacred emotion engenders sacred emotion. It is difficult to extrapolate cause and effect. For example, being 'authentic' or 'creative' are both outcomes of experiencing the sacred emotions and lived experience, and yet simultaneously contribute to them. The practice and the outcome are synonymous. Accordingly, there is no boundary that can be drawn between 'lived experience' and the 'outcomes' of applied mindfulness. At this point in personal evolution, one is increasingly

appreciative and increasingly 'walking the talk', further contributing to wellbeing. It is posited that personal transformation becomes exponential and eudaimonic wellbeing and self-actualisation constitute normative experience. In effect, the *sacralised life* ensures subjective wellbeing.

Ideally, as a result of sustained mindfulness practice at the profane and mundane stages of the continuum, emotions transform into sacred emotions. This incremental shift transpires with practice and most probably continues over a lifetime. The empirical research undertaken here, validates this to a limited extent, as it shows highly significant improvements in psychological wellbeing, as a result of intermittent practice, over the relatively short time period of three months. To understand the potential outcomes of a more sustained practice, it is useful to make reference to Nhat Hanh, who has been practising for seventy years. In him, each step, word and gesture is carefully considered and articulated, and he embodies compassion, authenticity, meaning and purpose. As stated in his teachings and writing, his practice encompasses the whole of his lived experience, and every aspect of life is sacred. He emphasises the sacred nature of mindfulness and the significance of practice. 'Mindfulness as I see it, is the Holy Spirit...it helps us to become alive again and again, every time we practice' (Nhat Hanh, 2012). Mindfulness is a 'spiritual' quality or trait, and the practice by association is sacred, due in part to its capacity to catalyse a transformation of emotional, lived experience.

5.6.2. *Mindfulness as a Form of 'Positive Emotional Energy'*

Mindfulness, as established, is more than simply 'awareness'. Using the definition given by Nhat Hanh, it can be understood as a 'sacred' energising force.

This is due in part to the changes in emotional state that result from engaging in mindfulness practice. Practice alters the neurochemistry of the prefrontal cortex, which is the seat of positive emotion, and changes have been detected 'to a limited degree' in novice practitioners and to 'a striking amount' in adepts (Kristeller, 2007, 403). Practising within a group setting is also said to be *energetically* beneficial, as the individual 'profits from the collective energy of the sangha' or spiritual community (Nhat Hanh, 2012). Indeed, positive affect is said to be contagious (see Bono and Illies, 2006). Thus mindfulness is a 'positive energetic resource' that is generated by the individual and consolidated by a group of practitioners. Participating in a community of mindfulness practitioners is also beneficial as it provides consistent reminders that life 'in general' is sacred, and every activity undertaken constitutes an informal practice. A one-day workshop or a residential retreat provides the opportunity to experience the cumulative effects of the 'positive emotional energy' that is generated through meditative practice in a group.

Whilst attending a retreat at Throssel Hole in Northumbria with the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives (OBC), it became apparent that activities were being undertaken with an awareness of the impact that the individual has, on the collective energy of the sangha. In a SRJ entry I noted,

Throughout the weekend emphasis was placed upon the group undertaking tasks in unison and in harmony with the ordained community. The meditation hall was used as a dormitory and everyone was instructed to sleep with their feet pointing towards the walls.

Waking, getting out of bed, putting the beds away, and getting showered

and dressed, all had to be performed in a designated order. All crockery and cutlery in the dining room had to be stored and set out in a particular way. The food was passed from one person to another in a designated order and everyone began eating concurrently. Although I didn't feel that the reasoning for this was explained fully, it was stated that every task was performed in a way that 'conserved' energy. It was also explained that when walking, hands should be placed at the navel rather than left to hang freely, the left hand forms a loose fist and the right gently envelopes it...It seems as though the individual can enhance the collective flow of energy by conserving their personal energy.

These practices centred upon the conservation of physical, psychological, and emotional energy. Emotional energy is both physiological and psychological, and cognition impacts greatly upon it. By removing decision-making processes and carrying out activities by rote, one therefore conserves emotional energy. This 'credits' one's 'energy bank' and this is beneficial at the individual and collective levels.

Particularly whilst facilitating meditation for others, I become aware of an intense positive energy or peacefulness that builds and manifests within me. It is a complete stillness or 'emotional equanimity', which in the psychological literature on mindfulness, is described as 'an advanced level of stress and affect tolerance' (Kristeller, 2007, 403). An extract from my SRJ describes the experience,

It is a feeling of being 'centred' within my body, one of mind and body in complete alignment with one another and the present moment. It is an experience of extreme concentration and focus in the spaciousness of the present, which is simultaneously an intense, direct connection with my body, feelings and thought processes. The peace enfolds my mind and body and I feel 'complete' and 'unwanting'. It is a feeling of immense wellbeing. I become totally 'locked' within my experience and the physical boundary of my body, and yet simultaneously feel completely expansive. The space I create 'within' is 'infinite'. The mind ceases to be dispersed, and becomes anchored deep 'within' that inner space. At this time, however fleetingly or prolonged, there is no expenditure of emotional energy. As psychological activity ceases, all anxieties recede and the 'positive emotional energy' accrues. The accumulation of positive emotional energy becomes intense in the extreme when guiding a practice for others. As I instruct a thorough investigation of the body, particularly internally, my concentration deepens and the duality that formerly seemed to exist between 'me' and 'my body' dissipates. As I penetrate the layers of my form, there is a spaciousness that opens up simultaneously within and beyond me.

This raises the question of the extent to which the facilitator's emotional energy affects the group and vice-versa. Indeed, there appears to be an emotional 'energy exchange' that occurs between people in general, which is amplified within a therapeutic group. It is not uncommon in a group situation for me to sense that someone has a headache and this is

quickly verified by asking if someone within the group has (or had, before the meditation) a headache. I seem to experience others' physical symptoms, but for varying lengths of time. As I identify the symptom and establish that it is not 'mine' the feeling usually subsides within me, and the symptoms usually dissipate within the afflicted person. It is apparent that an emotionally grounded energetic exchange takes place within the therapeutic group space. This must be present to some extent within all groups of people?

The notion of the transference of emotional energy between group members was highlighted whilst attending a one-day course on group dynamics at The Red House, which provides specialist psychotherapy services in Manchester. The facilitator explained that on occasion one group member will express the emotions shared by the group as a whole, and may even cry 'on behalf of' the group.

Based on this and previous evidence given, the practice of mindfulness enables one to accrue positive emotional energy, through the sacred emotions. To continue with the 'banking' metaphor introduced above, when emotional energy levels are depleted through the predominance of profane emotional experience, the 'energy bank' is in deficit. Mindfulness can be practiced to generate 'sacred' emotions and boost positive emotional energy, which puts the bank in 'credit'. When the energy bank is in credit its reserves of positive energy restore peace of mind and wellbeing to the individual. The effects of this may be used interpersonally to good effect also, by enhancing relationships in general and more intentionally for therapeutic purposes, to catalyse wellbeing or

'healing' in others. It is therefore necessary for the facilitator's emotional energy to be buoyant when working with others, and to be aware of the effect that the group members have on one another.

5.6.3. *The Significance of 'Stopping Running'*

Retreating from mundane lived experience is a means of experiencing a heightened state of mindfulness, through a retreat from external sources of sensory stimulation, because 'when you stop running you have peace and happiness right away' (Nhat Hanh, 2012). The reduction of external sensory stimulation combined with a slower pace of life, has a salutary effect. Whilst on the Isle of Muck in September 2011, during a solitary retreat I wrote,

van der Rohe was indeed right 'less is more' - that's what retreating (retreating my self) is all about. Doing less, being more - having less, appreciating more. 'Making space' both physically and psychologically. The appreciation comes from letting go of my attachments - to food, surroundings, routine, my wants - and what I think of as my 'needs' - the routines that I blindly follow like a sheep (the sheep surrounding the yurt are revealing my self to me!). Stepping out of the 'routine', the mundane, I become more discerning, I 'feel' my needs, as opposed to thinking them, I take time to consider my options and I see more possibilities, I create alternatives by thinking outside of the 'box' that defines my routine life. I access my innate wisdom, which comes through my connection with nature - but perhaps also in simply disconnecting from my attachments.

Solitude, or silence, or both, are important – having no ‘input’ is important. I have done no reading here. Input has come from a couple of brief exchanges in ‘trite’ conversation, and I can see directly how even that affected me - it intruded upon my inner landscape for quite some time after the event. Words spoken and received leave an impression on the heart and mind. This emphasises the importance of mindful communication – speaking *and* listening.

As I embrace the silence and solitude I can hear my own voice, my authentic self. I can live my own ‘truth’. It’s too easy under ‘normal’ circumstances to ignore it!

This retreat more than any of the others allowed me to understand the significance of retreating from routine. In addition, being in solitude and silence enabled me to become increasingly aware of my intrapersonal dialogue and the effect that has upon my emotional state and lived experience. In the silence and solitude I was able to access my authentic self and live in accordance with my authentic self, which contributed to my feeling of wellbeing. Living was void of ‘struggle’.

Parallels can be drawn here with those who participated in the one-day MBSA course, they too were ‘on retreat’ from their routine, albeit relatively briefly. For some, that was challenging, but as demonstrated in Chapter 4, for many it also prompted insight into the authentic self and subjective values.

5.6.4. The Body as a Site of Sacred Significance

Awareness of the relationship between physical embodiment and the present moment is emphasised within the mindfulness literature, 'awareness brings us back to ourselves, and when we are fully mindful of our body, and living in the here and now, we are in our true home' (Nhat Hanh, 2011, 31). The experience of the body as the 'true home' is indicative of a present moment connection with the body. As delineated above, it is the complete alignment of one's awareness with the body. Appreciation that develops through practice can result in the sacralisation of the body. When the body is perceived as a spiritual home, it assumes sacred status.

Kabat-Zinn cites the poem 'Love after Love' by Derek Walcott, which uses the metaphor of 'arriving at your own door' to explain this connection (2005, 496). He makes a plea for the practitioner to move beyond self-acceptance to self-love, through the management of 'emotional conditioning' which can otherwise prevent the development of a meaningful intrapersonal relationship (ibid., 497). The present moment is the time to 'come home to the self' by focusing mindfully on the embodied self and one's relationship to it. Through practice of the body scan technique an appreciative relationship with the body develops. The body scan raises somatic and emotional awareness, as a result of sequentially acknowledging, or concentrating on each part of the body.

It is posited that the majority of people are 'out of touch' with their body and that this is the result of a media-fuelled preoccupation with physical appearance (Kabat-Zinn, 1990, 75). The media encourages conformity to ideal physical stereotypes, and in the process alienates people from their individuality. The body scan exercise familiarises and reconnects the practitioner with their body. Ideally, it raises awareness in general and emotional awareness in

particular. It fosters appreciation and this leads to acceptance, and ultimately sacralisation. When guiding the body scan, I explicitly encourage practitioners to develop appreciation for each bodily part and its function, and raise awareness of the importance of appropriate nutrition and exercise, without engendering negative self-judgment.

The body is a highly significant vehicle for enabling present moment awareness. As demonstrated above and below, when attention is held 'within' the body it is neither straying to the past or the future, both of which can create emotional anxiety. When present moment awareness is combined with acceptance it creates a state of relaxation within the body and the mind. Familiarity with bodily 'feelings' leads to the somatic awareness of emotional states as they arise, and the body therefore becomes a conduit for emotional management. In addition, the simple identification, or 'bare observation' of a feeling as it is in process is sufficient to denature it (Nhat Hanh, 2006, 111). Indeed, the application of mindfulness, including acceptance and non-evaluative awareness, can, as described above with reference to identifying a headache, alter its 'whole character' (ibid., 67).

The body itself develops into a site of sacred significance and that is reflected in lifestyle choices that promote good health. Through consistent deep reflection, the 'miraculous' nature of the body is understood. Another SRJ entry provides further detail of the physiological experience and further expounds the understanding of the body as a site of sacred significance,

the feeling of total presence with my body is a sense of my awareness being enveloped within my body, which itself seems simultaneously

boundless. My arms were like lead, immovable. I was aware of the solidity of my body, but also the lightness, and the impermanence of it. Actually it was more like the solidity of my self, or mind (something inner), and yet paradoxically it *wasn't* a feeling of permanence.

This is a feeling of one-dimensionality, in which mind and body are fused together. I feel flat, one-dimensional and yet infinite. I have awareness of my whole body, but due to its 'lightness' it feels non-existent. The body is certainly a significant resource for understanding emotion, but as this account and the following one demonstrate, focus upon the body can also lead to a 'spiritual' experience, within which the physical body is transcended. During the *vipassana* retreat I experienced a profound and infinite 'present moment awareness', a transcendence that arose from the concentration of scanning sequentially through the body.

The previous day as I was in the meditation hall practising the body scanning technique, I had experienced gradually becoming engulfed in a bright 'sunshine-like' light. This was something I had encountered with other meditation techniques, but previously it had been a fleeting experience, one that dissipated as soon as I grasped after it. This time it lasted and was accompanied by a joy that filled my entire being. It was truly a state of bliss. I was aware of experiencing it for a long time. It was as though I was riding the 'state' or the 'wave' and it was completely up to me when I alighted. Perhaps predictably, I stayed with it for some time, aware of a beaming smile that had taken hold of my face. I was, and I still

am amazed that 'concentration in', and 'connection with' my physical body can be a direct portal to a 'transcendent' spiritual experience

This experience was repeated several times in the days that followed. Each time it lasted for an hour or more, although that time passed instantaneously. In contrast, the following example shows the significance of the body by documenting the process of losing connection with it, by becoming 'lost' in thought and therefore losing the peace of being in the present moment.

When I become carried along in a 'train' of thought, I completely lose contact with my body. It disappears from my awareness totally. I am then situated 'outside' of my body. There are times when I become so engrossed in my thoughts that I lose all awareness of my heartbeat which is so loud, so strong, when I do connect with it. Where does it go? When I eventually quieten my mind I automatically reconnect with it.

The heightened awareness and connection with the body, as a result of meditative experience, inevitably shapes the perception of the body as a site of sacred significance. This is also reflected in the accounts of those participants who made lifestyle changes as a result of the practice. Essentially, increased somatic awareness leads to changes in behaviour at many levels, resulting in wellbeing.

5.6.5. The Sacred Breath

The breath is fundamental to mindfulness practice. It is often used as a focal point during preliminary practice, in order to develop concentration.

Concentration on the breath conduces familiarity with the rhythm of the breath and as such it can provide an indication of subjective emotional states. For example, when the breath is subtle, the mind and body are peaceful. As demonstrated above, concentration on the breath can also be applied directly to ameliorate profane emotional states, due to its impacts upon psychology and physiology. Mindfulness practice requires 'following' rather than 'controlling' the breath in order to synchronise psyche and soma. Bringing attention to the breath at the abdomen is recommended in order to exert a sense of calmness and relaxation, because diaphragmatic breathing automatically slows and deepens the breath (Kabat-Zinn, 1990, 53-55). In addition, directing the breath to areas of discomfort within the body allows the breath to 'penetrate and soothe' them, whilst simultaneously calming the mind (ibid., 56). The practitioner is instructed to place full attention on each breath for its entirety, in order to reconnect with the body and the present moment (Nhat Hanh, 2006, 35). During the regulation of the breath, the mind 'is the breath and only the breath', and in response 'peace and joy arise' and stabilise within the mind (ibid., 37). It is necessary to dispense with the notion of mind or perception, and perceived object as separate, they become synonymous through the practice (ibid., 110). As demonstrated above, it is possible to calm the most virulent of profane emotions such as anger, through concentration 'in' the breath. 'Becoming' the breath ensures the exclusion of thoughts, and any identification with thought that results from cognition.

Through increased somatic awareness the breath can indicate emotional states. Ultimately, the breath restores peace, which is synonymous with

wellbeing, by aligning mind and body with one another and with the present moment. Each breath provides an opportunity to come home to the authentic self.

5.6.6. *'No Separation'*

Wellbeing and the sacred emotions are conterminous. The sacred emotions are those, which are core and the profane emotions are those, which threaten the sacred. They are interrelated. As elucidated above the ability to transform profane emotional experience using mindfulness and concentration can lead directly to an experience of the sacred emotions. Through the 'management' of the profane emotions it is possible to increase experience of the sacred emotions. Indeed, the longevity of happiness depends upon emotional competence and emotional resilience, and being able to embrace and embody the pain of suffering rather than suppressing it (Nhat Hanh, 2012). Mindfulness and concentration are fundamental to experiences of the sacred emotions, particularly inner peace. Concentration placed upon the present moment relinquishes unconstructive memories of the past, and anxieties that arise in connection with the future. Mindfulness is described as the 'basic and essential ingredient' necessary for the attainment of happiness (Nhat Hanh, 2006, 66). Specifically, 'mindfulness brings concentration' and 'concentration brings insight' (Nhat Hanh, 2010, 44). These qualities work together to provide insight into the impermanent nature of phenomena, and this understanding enables the practitioner to assimilate profane emotion.

In this context, insight is described as a process of 'looking deeply' into the 'true nature' of phenomena, in order to comprehend their 'emptiness' and

'impermanence' (Nhat Hanh, 2012). Impermanence refers to the changing nature of phenomena, which arise and disperse in dependence upon the appropriate causes and conditions. Emptiness refers to the lack of inherent existence, or the 'separate self' nature, of phenomena. Phenomena do not exist independently. They are interdependent. This is explained using the example of a flower, which manifests as the result of the changing form of what were previously 'non-flower elements' such as the earth, clouds and the sun (ibid.). The flower cannot exist independent of these constituent parts. With insight, one perceives not only the non-flower elements, but also the impermanent nature of form and the interconnection of all phenomena. Having this theoretical understanding enables the practitioner to 'accept' profane emotions and with practice come to place value upon them. Ultimately, it enables the 'reframing' of profane experience that leads to a peaceful psychological and physiological state.

The notion of all phenomena 'inter-being', a term coined by Nhat Hanh, is central to mindfulness and his teachings, which provide a contemporary presentation of traditional Buddhist philosophy. Kabat-Zinn also, is majorly informed by Buddhism and uses the term 'no separation' to explain the phenomenon of interconnection, which he explains, is pivotal to the development of universal compassion (2005, 338). An understanding of the theory is useful to deepen practice and augment empathy, but there is no substitute for the realisation of the teachings in practice. During a mindfulness retreat I attended in 2010 led by Nhat Hanh, I noted,

I was eating a bowl of muesli particularly 'mindfully'. It took almost an hour for me to finish it. I ate slowly and deliberately, placing my spoon

down between mouthfuls and closing my eyes as I chewed in order to minimise distraction and to maximise my connection with the food and its various 'non-muesli elements'. As I chewed I had an experience of complete 'oneness'. There was no separation between my self and all that the muesli represented. All duality disappeared in an instant and for that one mouthful it was as though I became 'one' with the whole of creation. It was unlike my experiences during formal meditation, although it encompassed simultaneous feelings of great expansion and inclusiveness. It was a 'pow' moment, like in a comic book. There was a prolonged 'explosion' of light and abstract form within me that simultaneously consumed my self and encompassed the entire solar system. As though all of life was contained within me, and I in it. In retrospect, there was a sense of ego-transcendence, accompanied by what I can only describe as a moment of pure ecstasy, when I 'lost' my self.

Later the same day I wrote,

I was lying on the grass watching the clouds cross the blue sky. I sensed that the cloud and my self were intimately and timelessly connected. Momentarily I 'became' the cloud. This was in one sense a familiar feeling, not unlike the feeling of intimate connection with my body and breath that I experience during formal meditation. Momentarily, I *became* the cloud, just as I become the breath or my body during formal practice.

These experiences of intimacy and no separation with ‘inanimate’ objects were the result of practising mindfulness informally. They signalled beyond question, the sacred nature of life itself, within what is otherwise perceived as a mundane context.

5.7 The Mundane Paradigm

As discussed above, there is a long and rich history of research devoted to understanding the sacred and profane in both ontological and cultural sociological contexts. The ‘sacred’ is increasingly understood to be interwoven into the fabric of the mundane, and yet explication of the mundane paradigm itself, remains scant. Therefore, an explication of the mundane paradigm in relation to emotional lived experience, mindfulness, and its practice, will now be provided.

As with the sacred and profane, the mundane is also defined in relation to the other categories. Indeed, there is greater necessity to refer to the sacred in particular, when explicating the mundane paradigm of lived experience because of the complex relationship they share, as demonstrated above. It is this relationship in particular, that makes the mundane field of emotional experience a potentially fertile ground for the transformation of lived experience. The vastness of the central position that the mundane paradigm occupies within the continuum of emotional development, contributes to its great potential to effect change. Specifically, through a shift in psychological perspective, which results from increased mindfulness, the emotional response to life also transforms. However, it is important to note that when ‘mindful awareness’ is brought to an activity, it does not automatically guarantee an experience of joy and a sense of

the miraculous. Indeed, it may simply result in greater awareness of one's 'negative' profane emotional state, or alternatively somewhere towards the centre of the spectrum, it may be received with 'mundane' disinterest.

To improve understanding of how mindfulness can be applied effectively to lived experience, which in this context is determined by emotional experience, it is necessary to deconstruct the mundane paradigm. This is achieved firstly through an explication of the 'context', that is, the 'emotions and lived experience', and secondly through deepening understanding of the 'practice' by unpacking the sacred nature of 'formal and informal' practice, including 'compassionate intention' and 'the outcomes of practice'. Whilst it is acknowledged that these categorisations are applicable within the sacred and profane paradigms also, those relationships are considered to be less complex than they are within the mundane field of experience. However, it is anticipated that this deconstruction will contribute to greater understanding of the sacred and profane paradigms of experience also.

5.7.1 Context: Emotions and Lived Experience

In the context of the mundane, the emotions and lived experience are typically those, which go largely unnoticed by an individual from 'moment to moment'. It is life that is generally lived without 'conscious' awareness and it includes what may be regarded as 'commonplace' or even 'tedious' experience. As such, it includes daily activities that for the majority of people are largely overlooked, insignificant and therefore unappreciated. The category of mundane emotions includes that which is without either profane or sacred emotion. It is *relatively* 'emotionless', and the emotions that are experienced do not cause particular

disturbance to the monotone of life. The mundane 'context' refers to tasks or activities, which constitute 'lived experience' and also to the subjective emotional experience associated with them, as there is a logical correlation between the two. For example, mundane emotions are often associated with habitual activities commonly agreed to be a necessity in everyday life, such as maintaining personal hygiene and undertaking domestic duties, actions that do not ordinarily require a heightened awareness to perform, and do not result in a state of heightened emotion.

Prior to the application of mindfulness, participation in a mundane task or activity is most likely to equate with a mundane emotional experience. However, when activities are undertaken with mindfulness, they consequently assume greater significance for the individual, although this may not necessarily be a 'sacred' significance. Mindfulness can *at least* make the habitual 'conscious', thus increasing its significance to some extent. It may still be regarded as mundane, but the shift in perception, however incremental, represents the transition that is requisite for the mundane lived experience and emotions, to eventually shift to the sacred end of the continuum.

As demonstrated above and below, when mundane activities are undertaken more slowly and less automatically, they can be used to bring the practitioner into the present moment. The practice in this context can be used to develop concentration and mindfulness, and these may result in sacred lived experience and emotions, which can occur spontaneously or over time, through the repetition of practice. As such, the plethora of everyday 'mundane activity' that one engages in, is potentially a source of 'emotional transformation'. Through a simple process of reframing the familiar, it becomes possible to transcend the

'typical' mundane emotional responses and experience a sense of wonder and joy. The utilisation of mundane activities as mindfulness practice can thus result in 'atypical' sacred emotional responses and lived experience.

5.7.2 *The Sacralisation of Practice*

The mundane paradigm is coterminous with 'machine thinking', and this can result in the experience of life as mundane (Nhat Hanh, 1975, 12). A lack of awareness of activities as they are being undertaken is sometimes referred to as a mode of 'automatic pilot', and this too results in experience of the mundane emotions (Kabat-Zinn, 1990, 22). The vast majority of lived experience, for most people, is lived at the mundane emotional level, which is interspersed with sacred and profane emotional experience. Emotions and lived experience as 'context' may be mundane, but when practice is undertaken consciously and *intentionally* it is always to some extent sacred, that is, it is undertaken with a particular personal significance.

With reference to this, it is interesting to recall the emotional shift that was evident in each group of participants following their initial experience of mindfulness practice. Upon opening their eyes post-practice the majority of participants were smiling, the experience of mindfulness meditation had clearly transformed their emotional state and this in turn, on either a conscious or non-conscious level, will have transformed their perception of the practice. This shift in perception was especially evident in the group five participants, who had not volunteered. It is likely that perception of the practice is to some extent commensurate with personal receptivity, based on understanding of how it can be applied to good effect in the practitioner's life. As discussed above, one

participant could not see how the practice applied to her experience at work. She remained somewhat resistant throughout, and in feedback repeatedly expressed the 'inappropriateness' of the course in a working environment. However, the designation of the workshop as 'inappropriate' may in itself be based upon her perception of the practice as sacred and therefore 'inappropriate' in the work place.

Ultimately, if the practice is in some way revelatory or self-disclosing, or results in experiences of the sacred emotions, it is inaccurate to label the practice itself as mundane. When time is set aside for practice then it obviously has sacred significance for the practitioner. Indeed, it is posited that if the initial encounter with the practice induces a sense of peace and wellbeing, then from that time it will assume sacred significance. Alternatively, if the practitioner has a profane emotional experience initially, which, as demonstrated in Chapter 4 does sometimes happen, the practice may well, although not always, be perceived by them as mundane or even profane.

The mundane refers to the 'logics, practices and aesthetics of everyday life' (Lynch, 2012, 134). It constitutes a vast arena within which, the prominent integration of social life takes place. It is a highly significant source of implicit, often undiagnosed, sacred forms, and it is this diversity and complexity that gives the mundane the potential to be a rich source of emotional transformation. In the current context, the mundane paradigm shares a particularly close relationship with the sacred partly because 'mundane activities' can be used to practice mindfulness informally. Mundane activity is at the heart of informal mindfulness practice, where it provides an opportunity for mundane lived experience to be emotionally transformed.

As explicated, the mundane paradigm is indicative of subjective life experience that is predominated by a wide range of 'temperate emotions'. As such, emotional experience is largely and relatively monotonous with inconsistent experiences of stress (the profane) and wellbeing (the sacred). At this level, 'formal' mindfulness practice is often used to consciously reduce stress and improve wellbeing. Through its application in formal and informal contexts the practice will increase in personal significance, especially if the outcomes are desirable. It is anticipated that within a relatively short time-period, under such circumstances, the practice itself will become sacrosanct for the practitioner.

5.7.3 Compassionate Intention

Intention is deeply connected with practice and it therefore requires careful consideration. When a commitment is made to practice mindfulness either formally or informally, it requires an intention to practice (Mace, 2008, 21). Practice becomes sacred when habitual actions are undertaken with ritualistic significance and a concomitant 'sacred intentionality'. Having the intention to be mindful brings the practice into conscious awareness and this is fundamental to practice at each stage of the continuum. In effect, the intention to practice is always sacred, although the emotional experience that motivates it is likely to be profane or mundane.

Any mindfulness practice when undertaken consciously, must also be motivated to some extent by a wish for personal transformation, and at the level of mundane emotional experience, this may come from a desire to reduce stress and increase wellbeing through the attainment of inner peace. The individual act of practising mindfulness also has social significance, because 'peace in oneself'

inevitably contributes to 'peace in the world' (Nhat Hanh, 2012). The two are interdependent and motivated by compassion, the former by self-compassion, and the latter by universal compassion. Thus, compassion is a common denominator that stimulates the intention to practice, formally and informally.

The following example of a potentially mundane activity differentiates compassionate intention from a mundane intention. It simultaneously differentiates mindfulness as a type of 'sacred awareness' distinct from 'mundane awareness'. 'If we are aware, naturally we will try to use fewer plastic bags. This is an act of peace, a basic kind of peace action' (Nhat Hanh, 1991, 108). If the 'peace action' is motivated by a wish to improve conditions for humanity, and is undertaken in reverence for the environment, the simple act of using fewer plastic bags is borne of a compassionate intention, a type of sacred awareness. However, if using fewer plastic bags is motivated by the accumulation of supermarket 'reward points' the awareness and intention are mundane. The act may still be 'mindful' and it may have worthwhile consequences, but if it is financially motivated and *primarily* 'self-serving', and does not *consciously* render 'the world a better place', or make one's self 'a better person' *per se*, the intention is mundane. On the contrary, when one is 'consciously practising' mindfulness the intention is sacred, because it is based in compassion.

5.7.4 Outcomes of Mindfulness Practice Within the Mundane Paradigm

As demonstrated, there is a complexity to the mundane, the unpacking of which, relies on comparison with both the sacred and the profane, because emotional experience is constantly shifting between the paradigms. Unlike the two

extremes of the continuum of emotional transformation, which are represented by heightened emotional states, generally evaluated as 'positive' at one end, and 'negative' at the other end of the spectrum, the mundane by contrast is somewhat diffident. This lack of conspicuous feature contributes to its complexity and the need for comparison. Whatever the initial motivation for engaging in practice, the outcomes of applied mindfulness result in either sacred, mundane, or profane, emotional experience. Greater understanding of informal practice and the outcomes within a 'mundane' context were required and the solitary retreat was therefore undertaken on the Isle of Muck in September 2011, to provide anecdotal evidence of the outcomes of informal practice in mundane contexts.

The following account documents the journaling process and how it may be used as an adjunct to mindfulness practice. It delineates self-awareness gained through reflexivity and provides understanding of personal processes that in turn influence choice and change. The complexity of mindfulness practice in connection with mundane emotional experience is apparent, particularly the transformation of the mundane into the sacred. The series of SRJ extracts demonstrate the value of informal mindfulness practices and encapsulate depth of understanding of the practice gained over a four-year period.

Saturday 3 September 2011

I am not going to set a schedule whilst here. My intention is to 'live mindfully' - to do my best to carry out each action that I undertake, with mindfulness.

As I am gradually slowing down and my mind races less, and my thoughts become fewer, I am able to really hear/listen to the sea and the fire. I'm pleased with my fire-making skills, it's burning well! It's an art, getting the vents in the door and the flue just right, and keeping the fuel at the right level.

I realise too, that writing this journal is a mindfulness practice. I can see that my handwriting has altered. It has become more legible as I have become less hurried.

I realise that there is value in just closing my eyes wherever I am. I can just stop and connect with my self for a few breaths. I don't always have to practice formally, sitting on my cushion. With my eyes closed I hear more acutely too. My ears become my 'eyes' to some extent. I remember dad once saying something about that.

Being here and completely alone is a very different experience from an organised retreat where everything is prepared for you and there is a full schedule of 'activities'. There is no collective energy here to rely upon, to enable my practice. However, I have the nurturing energy of nature, which instantly transforms my emotional experience for the better. Just crossing the border into Scotland and driving through the hills had a therapeutic effect on me.

The practice here, is chopping the wood, choosing the vegetables, preparing, cooking and eating the meals. I'll perhaps have less time to meditate formally, but it feels good to have the opportunity to apply mindfulness so completely to my everyday activities. I have experience of this at home of course, but this feels different. At home, I am especially aware of this when I am doing my cleaning job, I am aware that the approach I bring to a 'chore' determines my emotional experience. The first time I realised this I was washing a cloth under the tap, caught in thoughts and a degree of resentment at wanting to be somewhere else, when I suddenly became mindful of my actions. The water, the cloth, my intention, all became somehow meaningful. The tension released from my face and I felt a deep appreciation for what I was doing. My emotional state shifted to one of pure joy. In effect, I can *choose* my emotional experience. Here, with my mind completely focused, the mundane activities seem inherently joyful and meaningful.

Sunday 4 September 2011

I woke and lay in bed considering my options. I had a feeling of complete acceptance of my self and whatever I do or do not decide to do. That is so different from waking up at home and feeling the pressure of the start the day. I chose to stay in bed for a while listening to the waves, the sheep, and the birds. The sheep come right up to the yurt. I can hear them tugging the grass from its roots just the other side of the canvas, and then chewing it. The waves sound beautiful, they are gentle and somehow reassuring in their constancy. Ironically, the natural environment is quite

noisy here and it makes me aware of the quiet I enjoy at home, especially in the evenings when I meditate. Here too, it is so silent away from the sea and my sheep. I was on a tree swing yesterday, suspended in the air. It was as if time stood still.

Whilst making my bed, I was aware of each movement, aware of taking my time and being present with the task at hand. I was aware of walking mindfully to the outside toilet this morning, aware of each step and the soft grass beneath my feet. I was even aware of using the toilet mindfully, of not rushing! Sitting here now, writing, I am aware of scratching my face, of wiping my eyes, everything is becoming more deliberate, more considered. I am more conscious of my self.

I don't want to close my eyes to meditate the scenery is too beautiful, the light is too beautiful (I just had a sense that my eyes have been closed for long enough). I am acutely aware of the environment and being respectful of my wood and water consumption – I'll use the sea to wash what I can.

I 'liquidised' a banana with a fork. That was satisfying. No timesaving devices here. Time is abundant. I am able to enjoy the process of life. The almond milk I brought with me has gone off, breakfast, take two! Every job becomes a joy, such as slicing the banana and stirring the porridge – that is a meditation in itself! I now realise how quickly I adapted to having to make an alternative breakfast. I experienced complete acceptance. However, I was aware of the waste of food, I poured it 'back' into the

earth. I noticed also, how quickly food goes cold when I'm eating mindfully outside! I love washing my pots in the sea. The cold brings me back to life. I'm aware of slowing down more. I have no agenda and my body is breathing a sigh of relief.

I am not going to look at the time again. I want to go with the flow of my body and the natural light.

I'm making the most of being outside today, as it's sunny. I'm aware of not taking the weather and the day for granted. Just sitting watching the grass move in the wind is relaxing. Formal mindfulness meditation is a very different experience to being mindful in day-to-day life.

I meditated in the yurt after supper, aware of all of the noises. It wasn't great, I am tired and there was some resistance in me, as I want to be outside as much as possible. Afterwards, I sat and watched the sun set. It was beautiful. I am always surprised by how quickly the sun disappears.

Monday 5 September 2011

Initially, I was slightly apprehensive about sharing my space (ha! their space!) with the sheep. However, I feel I'm learning (about my self) through my proximity to them. I've noticed that when I'm calm, they are calm and more comfortable around me. When I fell asleep on the bench outside yesterday they had come really close to me. They eat and poo all day. They have nothing else to do. When I'm washing pots, shaking my

blankets, fetching and carrying, they appear to give me a 'look' as though they are asking me 'why?' It makes me question my self and my actions. Effectively, the sheep are my observing self. Later, as I took fresh sand into the toilet, I found myself telling them 'it's just what we do!'

While meditating I felt hungry for the first time since being here. I was going to stop and eat but then I realised it was good to feel the hunger in my belly and notice my associated thoughts. I was very grateful that at 9am (after the meditation) I would be able to eat, not everyone who feels hunger can do this. At breakfast I ate mindfully for the first time here. Sitting in my doorway staring at the ground, totally focused on chewing the food in my mouth. I'm really appreciating and enjoying my food much more than I do at home. I am also enjoying the preparation and cooking, the decision-making, choosing and weighing the vegetables in the shop. Everything is done with deliberate intent. It is all mindfulness practice.

Vacant staring at the grass feels good, just taking it all in. Meditating with my eyes open, but not being distracted by what I see. I've found this difficult in the past, not here though, not now.

I am now giving even more consideration to how I consume. I want to leave as small a footprint on the island as possible. The scrap metal and other debris that I saw dumped on one part of the island on the first day shocked me, but it also made me realise the problem of disposal here. The

rubbish that can't be safely burned or recycled, I will take with me when I leave the island.

The need to 'do' is slowly receding – but I'm aware this journal is a form of doing. I realise the value in recording my experience, I haven't done this in previous retreats due to the busy schedule, or 'rules' that prohibited it. It helps me to make sense of what I am experiencing. As I write it seems to free my thought processes, I free my mind for another thought or intuition. Words flow although sometimes disjointedly.

Washing my pots in the sea makes me extract every last bit of food from them. I realised yesterday that I leave more in a pan sometimes than some people eat in a day. It made me more mindful of my consumption, of not eating more than I need. I am really enjoying the fruitcake that Tim made though, really savouring it. At home I would eat more quickly, look down, and it would be finished. I'm also aware of not filling these pages, not cramming words right to the bottom edge – which is indicative of how I have lived my life for a long time – cramming everything in. I now have/leave more space and that feels good. I am pleased with how I live my life. Being here has made me understand that I am more mindful than I previously realised.

The 'wee' craft shop was full of consumables mostly island produced: lovely hand-knitted socks and gloves; a Hundertwasser mug of all things... I instantly found my self wanting it! It was interesting to note my

attachments, how quickly they form. There was an older lady at the shop and café who walked up the hill holding two vegetables as if they were very precious. Of course they are, we just rarely appreciate that they are. Perhaps the more one consumes, the less appreciative one becomes. 'Mindfulness is...consuming less, appreciating more.'

Mindfulness is not just being mindful of my/the self, it is being aware of the whole, and the impact I have on the whole. During my encounter with the ladies from the cottage today I was aware of my mindlessness. I said that having explored the island I realise I have the best location. That was so 'mindless'! Understandably, one of them came back with 'no we have!' A reminder for me to think before I speak – think of the consequences of my speech, how what I say makes other people feel. I was perhaps more aware of this because it was the first conversation I had had in a few days. The meeting with the ladies was an opportunity to practice mindfulness of course, but I found myself being judgmental, being intolerant of the one lady who talked 'continually', the one who said 'no, we have'. Being 'mindful' is about being respectful, and if I am enveloped in criticism and value judgments I am not being respectful. Also I am not being present, not giving the other person my undivided attention. I don't think I ever do when I meet someone for the first time. I am aware that I take in all of the visual clues and make judgments based on those, no doubt based on preconceptions and stereotypes. How joyful it must be to 'just see' the person without all of the associations my thinking mind makes. This is what K does, no wonder she is always smiling.

Meditation 7-8 pm: I achieved total stillness for the first time since I've been here. It was a good mindfulness practice because I stayed alert and focused. I had that 'sacred' feeling that accompanies total stillness and absolute presence. I guess that is a combination of joy and love? I find it is so much easier to generate this emotional experience through formal sitting practice than informal practices. Of course, that is the challenge!

Tuesday 6 September 2011

It is so warm in the cottage. I liked being out in the elements, feeling the cold on my skin, wearing lots of layers to keep warm. However, I had a bath tonight and that was so wonderful. The deliberate preparation felt ritualistic. I was so appreciative of the hot, running water, and the warmth of the cottage. I put lavender oil in the bath and lit candles. As a compromise I have decided not to use the electric lights in the cottage, I want the retreat to still embody the idea of getting 'back to basics' and living in response to the natural light, and consuming less. The water too was symbolic. It marked the transition from the outdoors and informal mindfulness practice, to formal practice and the predominance of sitting meditation. The retreat took on a different, more 'spiritual' quality. I set an intention to devote the remaining time on the island to formal sitting practice. Indeed, I followed the bath with a great meditation from 19.30 to 20.30. I was happy to listen to the wind, which has intensified, as I sat in the cottage feeling safe. I was able to concentrate well and be mindful. My

attention wandered occasionally and I got caught up with my thoughts but noticed pretty quickly and came back to the present, to my body.

This account shows the significance of informal practice utilising otherwise mundane activity, and demonstrates the ease with which the mundane becomes sacred when the conditions are conducive and mindfulness is applied. Within the mundane context, when taking time to perform tasks mindfully it became almost impossible to experience them as anything other than sacred. Every task assumed significance. In stripping life back to the bare essentials, appreciation also increased. The transition from the yurt to the cottage made this particularly evident. The simplification of life combined with the slower pace, made informal practice more accessible and more rewarding. The experience strengthened understanding of the breadth of application of the practice, which can in more common living conditions be reduced to formal seated meditation alone. The natural environment and concomitant retreat from commerciality also contributed positively to the experience, and witnessing the effects of consumerism on my personal attachments confirmed this. In addition, the journaling process enabled greater understanding of my intrapersonal communication and the brief encounters with others served as a reminder of the importance of practising mindfulness during interpersonal communication. It was interesting to see prejudice surface and also the way in which I applied a compassionate non-judgment to my self, in response to that.

The account delineates the relevance of combining mindfulness and self-awareness with self-reflective practice, and the personal insight that facilitated. In addition, it shows the complexity of mindfulness practice, and how it

encompasses and fosters compassion, appreciation, creativity and authenticity, all of which contribute to sacred experiences of the 'mundane'.

5.8 Concluding Comments

In order to further phenomenal understanding of mindfulness and its practice, this chapter has provided an interrogation and analysis of mindfulness within a framework of the profane, sacred and mundane emotional lived experience. It has enabled a deconstruction that contributes to the demystification of mindfulness and its practice. It also contributes to the development of a model that demonstrates how mindfulness can be applied within a mundane context, for the provision of wellbeing. As documented above, the vast majority of research concerned with the application of mindfulness is either oriented towards the sacred (religious) or the profane (clinical) end of the emotional continuum. The autoethnographical account extends understanding gained from the co-researcher accounts, by providing more nuanced elucidations of the practice and its outcomes. It illustrates the continuum of mindfulness-based emotional development through an elucidation of each of the applications and outcomes of the three paradigms.

In the following chapter, the knowledge gained, will be extrapolated to define exactly how the application of mindfulness within the mundane context, contributes to wellbeing. It is the culmination of the theoretical and empirical research, and it demonstrates the importance of mindfulness practice as a method of emotional development that leads to eudaemonic wellbeing, specifically through improved intrapersonal communication, which in turn leads to more effective interpersonal communication. The social nature of being

human is fundamental to this theory, which espouses the significant role of effective interpersonal communication in the quest for subjective wellbeing.

Chapter 6: The Application of Mindfulness in a ‘Mundane’ Context.

6.1 Introduction

As previously demonstrated through a review of the relevant literature, mindfulness has been utilised to great therapeutic effect to transform profane emotion within clinical contexts and particularly in the treatment of psychopathology. Also discussed, is the application of mindfulness within non-clinical contexts, both Buddhist and secular. However, the primary concern of this thesis has been to determine an application for mindfulness within a ‘mundane’ context and this chapter addresses that issue. Indeed, the primary motivation for undertaking the research was to establish a ‘personal development’ methodology that incorporates the salient features of the subjective turn, which can be utilised to enable wellbeing and counter the psychological stresses increasingly incumbent in ‘working life’ in the twenty-first century. A thorough deconstruction of the phenomena using empirical and theoretical methodologies has resulted in evidence that contributes to the understanding of how mindfulness can be applied to achieve eudaemonic wellbeing. This knowledge has been used to construct a model of ‘applied mindfulness’, explicated below, that may be utilised to promote wellbeing within the mundane context. It is considered wise to focus upon the desired outcome in preference to the ‘problem’, and so the emphasis here is solution-focused, although there is an inherent understanding that an increase in wellbeing will inevitably reduce stress, as the two are interrelated ends of a continuum. The knowledge and understanding acquired from the research has been incorporated into a four-phase model of personal development, and this is explicated below.

6.2 Personal Development

As previously delineated, self-awareness, mindfulness and self-reflection form a contemporary sacred triune. This is the basis of 'personal' or 'self' development, which is essentially a process of improving the ability to relate. The process is initially one of improving intrapersonal communication and consequently one of improving interpersonal communication. Both forms of relationship are nurtured through mindfulness, which is interrelated with self-awareness and self-reflection. Through the mindful observation of self it is possible to monitor and revise communication skills to enable a compassionate self-dialogue that ensures a therapeutic intrapersonal relationship. This in turn, becomes the blueprint for effective interpersonal communication. As previously demonstrated, working on somatic, cognitive, emotional, behavioural and linguistic modes of self-awareness improves communication at both the intrapersonal and interpersonal levels and ensures a sense of wellbeing, because it fosters inner peace and empathy (see Goleman, 1996, 96-97). In addition, interpersonal communication is fundamental to wellbeing because 'human beings are relationship oriented' and there is 'a deep human longing for connection' (Gillis-Chapman, 2012, 55, xi).

Through a process of mindfulness-based emotional development and the application of these principles, the self-attuned individual is able to increase emotional awareness and competence. These capabilities affect all forms of communication and significantly the individual is also better able to determine and act upon emotional cues that are connected with intuitive perception. Mindfulness can enhance this skill, which is essentially a state of consciousness

that registers within the physiology and simultaneously transcends the conscious thought processes (see Chapter 3, and Birnbaum and Birnbaum, 2004, 220). Specifically, intuitive perception is 'preconscious' or subliminal and can become conscious during mindfulness practices, when other cognitive processes are minimised. Mindfulness opens 'the channel of communication' with the body, to improve the sensory awareness, which leads to intuitive insight and enables us to 'know what we know' (Gillis-Chapman, 2012, 38). Empathy too, is concerned with somatic awareness. It is the 'felt sense' of another person's feelings, which is activated by 'mirror neurons' in the brain (Chaskalson, 2011, 115). The body and the two primary forms of communication, intrapersonal and interpersonal, are interwoven and due to its capacity to improve awareness in general, mindfulness is a significant method of improving both types of communication.

Working on somatic, cognitive, emotional, behavioural and linguistic modes of awareness improves communication at both the intrapersonal and interpersonal levels and therefore ensures a sense of wellbeing. This is the process of personal development elucidated below using the model of 'applied mindfulness' to demonstrate precisely how it enables effective communication at both the intra and inter personal levels.

6.3 The Application of Mindfulness

To further understanding, it is beneficial to deconstruct the 'blanket term' self-awareness using the five categories adumbrated above: somatic; cognitive; emotional; behavioural; and linguistic. It then becomes possible to provide detailed information on the contribution made by each mode of self-awareness

to communication. Through this deconstruction the complexity of self-awareness and the contribution of mindfulness is made apparent. The model highlights the interrelatedness of the five modes, which defy discrete categorisation and the definition of causation, because ultimately, *'thought and the perceptions that guide action, along with the feelings and urges that constitute the motivation for such action, are inseparable aspects of one whole movement'* (Bohm, 1996, 82, original emphasis). The complexity of the interplay between each mode of awareness will become apparent through the following deconstruction.

The model does not represent a hierarchy, as it is not possible to delineate causation or prioritise significance. Indeed, that would be too simplistic, as each mode of awareness contributes to effective communication through its interrelation with the other modes. Each of the five modes of self-awareness will now be discussed in the context of the two primary levels of communication, in order to clarify their contribution and interdependence.

| 5 Modes of Self-Awareness | 2 Levels of Communication | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| | (i) Intrapersonal | (ii) Interpersonal |
| <i>Somatic</i> | Sensations in the body | Body language |
| <i>Cognitive</i> | Quality of thoughts | Creativity and contribution |
| <i>Emotional</i> | Emotional resilience | Empathy |
| <i>Behavioural</i> | Authentic lifestyle | Integrity and compassion |
| <i>Linguistic</i> | Compassionate self-talk | Mindful dialogue |

Figure 3. Applied Mindfulness: A model of effective communication

(i) Somatic Awareness

At the intrapersonal level, awareness of the physical body and the physiology is gained primarily through the mindfulness practice of the body scan⁶. As discussed above, it enables an intimacy with the body that results in greater emotional intelligence. Somatic awareness extends to sensory awareness and includes touch, sight, smell, taste and hearing. The effects of improved awareness extend to diet, the need for exercise, sleep, and relaxation, by learning to 'listen' to the body and attend to it respectfully. Interpersonally, somatic awareness may be used to monitor body language, which as a primary form of non-verbal communication can reveal affect. The 'nonverbal channels' of communication include 'tone of voice', 'gesture' and 'facial expressions', the reading of which, improves interpersonal relationships (Goleman, 1996, 96-97). The body makes the emotions visible to others and by working consciously to mirror one another physically, it is possible to gain 'synchrony' or 'emotional rapport', which engenders effective interpersonal relationships (ibid, 116). As adumbrated above, it is also possible to experience 'somatic countertransference', that is, the re-experiencing of another's physical symptoms (Totton, 2003, 85). This constitutes an advanced or heightened form of body awareness, which is strengthened through sustained mindfulness practice and a process of analysis.

(ii) Cognitive Awareness

Mindfulness practice requires the detached observation of thoughts as they arise in consciousness. The practice dictates the non-judgmental observation

⁶ In addition, MBSR advocates 'mindful movement', which consists of a variety of yoga postures, often taught by facilitators who have not undertaken yoga teacher training.

of thought without attachment or aversion. Curiosity is applied in order to discern the orientation of thought, and patterns can be detected that show whether it is constructive or destructive. Rather than simply judging each thought as it arises, the practitioner can learn to observe the patterns that arise in their thinking. In time, this enables the individual to modify thoughts in order that they cohere with personal goals. This objective is based upon the understanding that thoughts are the initial determinant of one's lived experience. Through observation of thought it is possible to determine how one *creates* personal lived experience and how one may *contribute* positively to society. With cognitive awareness it is possible to determine the chain of events as they proceed from thought, to lived experience. Particularly within sports psychology, the power of thought to determine lived experience is firmly established. Sports psychologist Tom Bates (2012) states, 'what we're actually saying is "thoughts become things", and what we think affects the way we feel, and the way we feel ultimately affects the way we behave'. There is a causal chain that connects thought, emotion and behaviour, and ultimately lived experience. Cognitive awareness is invaluable not only because thought 'produces and shapes our *perception* of reality' but because it shapes reality itself (Bohm, 1996, 141, my emphasis).

(iii) Emotional Awareness

Although 'emotion' constitutes a discrete type of self-awareness within the model, as demonstrated previously, it is deeply interconnected with the other modes. Specifically, it is an amalgam of somatic and cognitive awareness and significantly it determines behaviour and verbal communication. Emotional

awareness is the linchpin in the five modes of awareness, and emotional development is fundamental to both 'intra' and 'inter' personal forms of communication. As discussed in Chapter 3, at the intrapersonal level emotional awareness gained through mindfulness practice, enables emotional competence and emotional resilience. As previously demonstrated, emotional development, which was central to the one-day MBSA workshop, has the power to effect personal understanding and lifestyle change. At the interpersonal level of communication it increases empathy, which is described as 'nondefensive listening' and as 'hearing the feelings *behind*' dialogue (Goleman, 1996, 145, original emphasis). Through the application of mindfulness, the tacit is made explicit. At the interpersonal level emotional awareness is also concerned with affect. As adumbrated above, this is connected with psychobiology and the ability to detect others' emotions. Specifically, 'affect' is distinguished from feelings and emotions, and defined as 'a non-conscious experience of intensity' that 'always precedes will and consciousness' (Shouse, 2005). It has physiological correlates that are felt in the muscles, viscera, respiration, skeleton, and blood pressure (ibid). In addition, mindfulness applied at the emotional level enables awareness of 'emotional contagion', the emotional resonance and transference that occurs non-consciously between individuals (Goleman, 1996, 114).

(iv) Behavioural Awareness

The fourth awareness is concerned with actions, and this includes a person's behaviour toward self, others and the environment. At the intrapersonal level this determines lifestyle choices that impact upon physical health and

psychological wellbeing. As demonstrated in Chapter 4, somatic awareness leads to awareness of diet, exercise, sleep and relaxation. It is the initial step in the process that ultimately determines behaviour. Through increased awareness it is possible to monitor personal behaviour more effectively to ensure that it results in change that will improve subjective lived experience. At this level of awareness, intrapersonal communication ensures that behaviour is authentic, that life is lived in accordance with personal beliefs and values. The influence of mindfulness ensures that ethicality and self-compassion inform choices. 'Self-compassion' counteracts 'narcissism' and 'downward social comparison' and therefore 'naturally' increases 'concern for the well-being of others' (Chaskalson, 2011, 118). Interpersonally, the influence of mindfulness practice ensures compassionate functioning in the world, because 'mindfulness' is '*heartfulness*' (Gillis-Chapman, 2012, 39, original emphasis). Kindness becomes integral to interaction with others and the natural environment. A sympathy develops with 'life itself' and this leads to an awareness of synchronistic events, and 'relationship as the organizing principle of the universe' (Jaworski, 1998, 45). In the quest for 'authenticity', practitioners are increasingly likely to 'act' with integrity and transparency, thus engendering optimal interpersonal relationships. Integrity is the hallmark of lived experience at this level, which is the result of increased awareness of behaviour and results in the ability to 'walk the talk'.

(v) Linguistic Awareness

In the intrapersonal context, linguistic awareness is tightly bound to cognitive awareness. Indeed, intrapersonal dialogue is a form of extended

thought. It is often a dialogue with thought. Linguistic awareness allows the practitioner to monitor self-dialogue, to ensure that destructive internal conversations are at least minimised, and at best, eradicated. Awareness of the 'voice of judgment (VOJ)', 'voice of cynicism (VOC)', and 'voice of fear (VOF)' ensures that the practitioner engages in constructive self-dialogue that is nurturing (Scharmer, 2009, 42-43). It relies upon accurate and compassionate self-assessments gained through mindful reflexivity. It minimises 'mental fiction', which stems from inaccurate, negatively laden self-assessment (Gillis-Chapman, 2012, 68). Simply by discerning self-dialogue with curiosity, learning to dispense with value judgments and noticing the emotional effects of self-talk, one is able to discern the contribution that it makes to lived experience. Linguistic awareness at the intrapersonal level, as with the other four modes of awareness, impacts upon behaviour at the interpersonal level. Specifically, self-acceptance gained through compassionate self-dialogue translates to compassionate dialogue with and acceptance of others. Optimally, in interpersonal communication words are chosen with precision to ensure mindful, yet authentic speech that eschews platitudes. Interpersonal dialogue, which includes speech and listening skills, is mindful and therefore compassionate. There is a heightened awareness of the power of the spoken word and its effects. It reflects the understanding that 'thoughts become things', and that as thoughts are verbalised their creative potency is magnified. Effective communication relies upon emotional awareness and awareness of the reciprocal relationship between emotion and verbal communication. Dialogue creates emotion, just as emotion creates dialogue. All interaction leaves an 'emotional imprint' on

those involved (ibid., 13). Consequently, there is awareness that words can be destructive or constructive, and that breakdown in interpersonal communication has an 'emotional impact' (ibid., 55).

(vi) Intuitive Perception

The application of the five modes of awareness at the intrapersonal level of communication increases the likelihood of intuitive perception. It is posited that the more 'complete' or 'expansive' a person's awareness is, the greater the opportunity to experience intuitive perception, which may occur within formal or informal meditative practice, or within life in general. Intuition is dependent upon awareness of self, other and environment. It may appear to manifest 'spontaneously' as a sudden 'illumination' or 'insight' (Hélie and Sun, 2010, 996). However, it is often the result of a deeper creative process, to which much prior thought has been committed and as such, it is synonymous with the incubation period that has been defined as part of the creative process⁷. Such insight can provide the solutions to perplexing and complex personal and professional problems and so it is prudent to become attuned to it.

As discussed, emotional competence is pivotal to effective communication at both levels and it is also fundamental to intuitive perception, which is often initially tacit and experienced largely within the physiology. Emotion acts as a gauge, an indicator of the tacit. Intuition is often described as a 'gut feeling' due to physiological correlates that are part of the process that leads to

⁷ Graham Wallas (1926) defined the four phase creative process as: (i) preparation; (ii) incubation; (iii) illumination; (iv) verification (Lubart, 2000-2001).

insight. Attending to the five modes of self-awareness ensures that their contribution to this form of subliminal communication, which takes place within the body and mind, is made explicit. Intuitive perception constitutes a valid source of 'emotional intelligence' that can be used effectively in conjunction with reason. Indeed, intuition and reason, which are commonly signified by the heart and the head respectively, are described as a type of 'bilateralism' (Senge, 2006, 157). The intelligence of the heart is endorsed within the natural sciences. Indeed, there is evidence that the heart possesses an innate intelligence. The term 'the heart's little brain' refers to a cluster of approximately ten thousand neurons that are present in the heart and provide physiological information that relates to emotion (Paterson, 2012). As such, the heart provides one of the 'main channels' of emotional information (ibid.). The term 'intuitive effect' is used to refer to the 'psychophysiological' responses that constitute a 'system-wide process' which is led by the heart, in the detection of 'future emotional events' (McCraty, Atkinson and Bradley, 2004, 333). In addition, visceral feelings, which are referred to as the 'belly brain's intuition' are not only connected with the 'emotional states' of self, they are also connected to the emotional states of others, thus providing evidence of an interpersonal somatic coherence (Radin, 2006, 145). Research that measures physiological activity also suggests that *minds* are 'entangled' (ibid., 19). The term 'psi' is used to denote the various forms of entanglement, which include telepathy, clairvoyance, precognition and psychokinesis, a term given to 'mind-matter interactions' (ibid., 6). From the evidence presented, it is clear that an innate physiological emotional intelligence exists and that the body's holistic

intelligence influences intrapersonal communication, particularly at the intuitive level.

6.4 Further Understanding of the Intuitive Process

As stated, empirical research that utilises EEG and fMRI technology to measure physiological and neurological responses shows that both the heart and brain receive and respond to intuitive information, and that the heart signals recognition of emotion before it registers in the brain (McCraty, Atkinson and Bradley, 2004, 325). The data also provide,

strong evidence for the idea that intuitive processes involve the body accessing a field of information that is not limited by the constraints of space and time. More specifically, they provide a compelling basis for the proposition that the body accesses a field of potential energy—that exists as a domain apart from space–time reality—into which information about “future”⁸ events is spectrally enfolded...we use this concept to show how the interaction between the body and the ambient field of energy surrounding it operates as a holographic-like information processing system that informs the body about a “future” event (ibid., 334).

This statement is an explication of quantum theory, which suggests that alternative parallel ‘realities’ might be accessible within a ‘multiverse’. This is a somewhat speculative theory based on particle physics and Thomas Young’s ‘double slit’ experiment, which shows that waves of light energy are

⁸ The term ‘future’ denotes any amount of time that precedes psychophysical reactions

simultaneously in multiple locations at any given point in time. This coheres with David Bohm's *Wholeness and the Implicate Order* (1980) a theory premised on the notion that the multiverse supersedes the universe, operating according to the principles of the 'implicate order',⁹ which 'enfolds' all phenomena (Bohm, 1996, 129). All potentiality exists within the implicate order and is subsequently made manifest in the explicate order of one's lived experience. Lived experience, so this theory suggests, is determined by cognitive processes created according to one's thoughts, values and beliefs. In essence, there is an infinite number of potential present and future scenarios accessible to every individual, the manifestation of which is dependent upon cognition. As stated above, this is validated in the field of psychology, also.

The theory of the implicate order posits that all phenomena are 'related' or interconnected and therefore conceptually interchangeable. It provides an explication of the nature of obscure, psychic phenomena and elucidates the notion of interconnection or 'oneness', referred to by Nhat Hanh above, as 'interbeing'. It is also synonymous with Jung's theory of the 'collective unconscious', a shared consciousness, which is accessible through the individual unconscious psyche. According to Jung, the unconscious is the source of intuitive perception, which is expressed through the language of archetypal symbolism, often in the form of dreams (Stevens, 1990, 20-21). However, intuitive perception does not always assume the archetypal form. The communication may occur more directly during waking hours and require little or no interpretation. Although the terminology may vary within different disciplines,

⁹ 'The best analogy to illustrate the implicate order is the hologram...I contrast this to a photograph. Every part of the hologram contains some information about the object, which is enfolded' (Bohm, 1996, 129).

the principles bear striking resemblance. Essentially, unconscious knowledge is the source of intuitive perceptions that are largely 'preconscious' or subliminal. They can be accessed through increased sensory awareness. Practicing mindfulness enables this process as it hones focus, concentration and the five types of awareness, and significantly it minimises cognition to create a 'mental space' in which intuitive perception is able to surface.

Having explicated the application of the five modes of self-awareness and the process of intuitive perception it is necessary to gain further understanding of the application of effective communication, particularly its significance in relation to others and why that impacts upon wellbeing.

6.5 The Significance of Effective Communication

Communication is pivotal to healthy functioning in the world and a harmonious intrapersonal relationship is requisite for authentic and effective interpersonal relationships. As demonstrated, emotion is at the 'heart' of being human. It dictates behaviour and therefore lived experience. As such, the management of emotion is fundamental for effective communication, and this in turn is central to achieving wellbeing because as demonstrated above, humans are inherently social creatures. Improving emotional competence is therefore a significant form of personal development. As established, it is an essential human trait that can be nurtured through a variety of mindfulness practices, and it is particularly effective when combined with reflective practices that increase critical self-awareness. These skills are effective techniques that can be applied to the life-

long process of 'emotional development' to improve intrapersonal and interpersonal communication.

Due to the social imperative that drives the human condition, eudaemonic wellbeing is not only dependent upon a healthy intrapersonal relationship, it is also reliant upon the quality of one's emotional presence 'in the world', in relationship with others. Ultimately, the effectiveness of emotional competence is proven through the quality of social interaction and interpersonal relationships. Effective communication at both levels requires mindfulness and transparency, both of which are commensurate with authenticity and being *emotionally* accessible, qualities that are also fundamental to wellbeing. These traits are encapsulated in the term 'presence', which is elucidated by Otto Scharmer in a dialogue with several colleagues,

To me, presencing is about 'pre-sensing' and bringing into presence – and into the present – your highest future potential... you aren't exploring a future someone else has written for you. It's more intimately connected with your evolving, authentic Self – who you really are. It's much more fluid, more open, more in dialogue with you... Maybe we as human beings participate in the process of laying down that path to a much higher degree than we understand (Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski and Flowers, 2005, 220-222).

This statement corroborates the principles of effective communication and their significance in the accomplishment of eudaemonic wellbeing, which is synonymous with personal development. It also coheres with the principles of

Bohm's theory of the implicate order discussed above, and the function of the individual in the creation of their lived experience. It highlights the notion of *life* as the ultimate 'creative process', one that is determined by an individual's actions, including cognitive processes.

In response to Scharmer's statement, Sue Flowers comments, 'I think there's an act of commitment that must occur first which actually creates the capacity to be an 'instrument' – or, as I like to imagine it, a dancer with life. It changes your life entirely when you make that commitment' (ibid., 222). Making this life-changing commitment to personal development and the accomplishment of wellbeing is commensurate with taking responsibility for one's lived experience. Effective communication begins with a commitment or intention that is intrapersonally substantiated, that demonstrates authenticity and equally significantly psychological flexibility, and the willingness to enter into a fluid 'dance with life'. It is necessary to 'tap into' intuitive perception and be willing to 'act' authentically in response to insight – to 'walk the talk' and 'go with the flow'. Indeed, intention and awareness lead to experiences of synchronicity,

The people who come to you are the very people you need in relation to your commitment. Doors open, a sense of flow develops, and you find you are acting in a coherent field of people who may not even be aware of one another. You are not acting individually any longer, but out of the unfolding generative order. This is the unbroken wholeness of the implicate order out of which seemingly discrete events take place. At this

point, your life becomes a series of predictable miracles (Jaworski, 1998, 185).

Explicit intrapersonal communication makes intentions transparent and this enables one to assume 'responsibility' for shaping subjective lived experience, a principle that epitomises the ethos of the turn to the self. Going with the flow of life minimises the anxiety that can occur due to feelings of personal resistance towards lived experience. The acceptance of 'what is' and the implementation of *psychological flexibility in response to lived experience*, is a significant application of the skills learned through formal mindfulness practice. Indeed, it is a therapeutic process, because it contributes to eudaemonic wellbeing. Ultimately, 'the therapeutic' is much more than the amelioration of profane emotion at the intrapersonal level. Rather, it is a process of consciously engineering sacred emotional energy in order to make a constructive contribution to everyday life, for the benefit of self, other and the environment.

6.6 'The Therapeutic' as a Form of Sacred Emotional Energy

A broader understanding of the value of 'the therapeutic' and its application is the legacy of 'therapy culture'. As previously established, many activities within subjective wellbeing culture are therapeutic although they are not necessarily regarded as 'therapy' *per se*, a term which is often reserved specifically for psychotherapies. As Furedi's discourse explicates, emotionalism has become increasingly central to British culture over the past three decades in particular (2004, 24-43). It is also central to therapy, and as demonstrated above it is pivotal to the 'therapeutic process' or 'spiritual healing'. The term 'therapy

culture' applies more appropriately to an amalgam of therapeutic procedures than to psychotherapy alone. Therefore, rather than 'therapy culture' reducing the individual to powerlessness and vulnerability as Furedi (2004) posits, it is more likely to have enabled effective therapeutic processes to take place.

'The therapeutic' is more than 'merely' an application to counteract psychopathology. It is also a means of making sense of lived experience and the emotionality that is commensurate with being human. 'Therapy culture' has facilitated mindful communication that is authentic, transparent and compassionate, and as elucidated above this is a necessary foundation for accomplishing subjective wellbeing. Effective intrapersonal and interpersonal communication contributes to this process through the 'manufacture' of individuals that value self and *therefore* community. As established, the therapeutic process represents a shift from profane to sacred emotional experience to generate 'sacred emotional energy' and mindfulness practices are effective techniques in this regard. Emotion forms an energy field that can be detected physiologically and emotional contagion constitutes a potent energetic force.

To simplify the three-fold typology of applied mindfulness and emotional development elucidated in Chapter 5, the continuum is determined by 'love' at the sacred end and 'fear' at the profane extreme. The 'journey' from fear to love is the path of subjective wellbeing. The individual transition from profane emotion to sacred also creates a ripple effect that contributes sacred emotional 'energy' to the emotional 'field' through contagion. Discourses concerning 'energy' are fundamental to the turn to the self and to healing in particular (see Partridge, 2005, 32-38). The emphasis is on energy, which constitutes a 'life

force', '*chi*' or '*prana*'. It is a 'spiritual' resource, the *élan vital* that is regulated internally through personal practices and facilitated therapies that restore energy within 'centres' and 'channels', such as the '*chakras*' and 'meridians'. The significance of the emotions is largely tacit within the healing discourses, and yet the emotions determine energy directly, as well as providing a gauge to indicate emotional energy 'levels'. For example, love represents a high emotional energy level and fear, a depleted level of energy. Emotional shifts at the intrapersonal level impact subjective energy levels, making the imperative for 'emotional healing' pivotal to the therapeutic process, not only in terms of subjective outcomes, but also in terms of mood contagion. Due to the physiological correlates any shift in the emotions towards the sacred end of the healing continuum will also contribute positively to physical health, as demonstrated through the empirical results in Chapter 4.

As established, the energy field is collective, it incorporates and encapsulates all beings and lived experience and it influences and is influenced by emotion. The *emotional* energy field is commensurate with the affective field and mood contagion. Importantly, it serves as an indicator of individual emotional resonance. Due to the pervasive nature of the emotional energy field it has considerable influence on individuals and 'communities'. As explicated, technology demonstrates and reason dictates that the predominant emotions of individuals will create a resonance, which impacts upon the whole. Just as sports spectators or concert audiences create and become absorbed in the predominant emotional energy of the event, so too do people in other types of social gathering from work to spiritual communities. Hence it is judicious to consciously create a sacred emotional energy, individually and collectively.

6.7 Countering the Narcissism Myth

The empirical research undertaken, which augments the theoretical research on subjective wellbeing, provides evidence that the claims of narcissism and vulnerability are unjustified. The research has shown that 'spirituality', which is concerned with inner development, specifically improving mindfulness, self-awareness and self-reflection, has a beneficial effect on psychological wellbeing, physical health, and productivity at work. However, the benefits of 'self-mastery' are clearly not solely personal. A happier, healthier and more creative individual is bound to have a direct impact upon close community and on society in general terms. Efficacious intrapersonal communication impacts the 'community' or group, because it leads to effective interpersonal communication and cohesion. Families, organisations, cities and countries all have the potential to prosper from individuals who source their full potential and hence their wellbeing. It ensures that groups benefit from the individual's subjective wellbeing. In the context of the empirical research and the workplace, it has the potential to impact positively upon interpersonal relationships and therefore team performance and ultimately economics, the *raison d'être* of commerce. Indeed, increased emotional intelligence (EI) affects 'team performance' because it builds 'intrateam trust' by 'minimizing miscommunications' and importantly, high leader EI is also shown to positively affect the team (Chang, Sy and Choi, 2011, 93-94).

For those who are consciously nurturing the self in non-work contexts, the motivation may *initially* be the transformation of personal suffering, and this is surely to be expected. It is unlikely that individuals will seek change when life

is functioning effectively and it is equally *likely* that the personal suffering, which prompts change, is interpersonally derived. By understanding the motivation that drives participation in the milieu it is possible to esteem it rather than condemn it as narcissistic. Indeed, it is proposed that applied mindfulness can help to counteract narcissism. Specifically, within the model of personal development proposed below, mindfulness with its emphasis on compassion for self, other and the environment, acts as a moderator of 'narcissistic' tendencies, due to its focus on interrelatedness. Also, it could be argued that what is termed 'narcissism' may just represent a healthy self-interest that all people necessarily engage to some extent, to ensure effective interpersonal functioning. In addition, the view that the turn to the self constitutes narcissism is largely delineated from an etic perspective, which lacks empirical evidence. This thesis has responded to that dialogue, of which Furedi's analysis of 'therapy culture' (2004) is a continuation, by providing empirical evidence, sourced from an emic perspective that serves to demystify the appeal of what is a therapeutic process of 'personal development'.

6.8 The Application of Mindfulness Within a 'Mundane' Context

When utilised within a mundane context such as the workplace, the therapeutic efficacy of mindfulness can be applied as a 'secular' programme of personal development. In this context it constitutes a type of creative process that is dependent upon intrapersonal and interpersonal communication, as demonstrated above and below. Whereas Kabat-Zinn's MBSR course is directed toward the relief of emotional stress, it is proposed that a prudent application of mindfulness-based training would be to concentrate on the development of

subjective wellbeing in general, and eudaemonic wellbeing in particular. As discussed in Chapter 3, eudaemonic wellbeing is synonymous with self-actualisation, it incorporates: self-acceptance; positive relations with others; personal growth; purpose in life; environmental mastery; and autonomy. It constitutes a form of 'personal mastery' that designates life as a 'creative work' (Senge, 2006, 131). For an individual to be proficient in this process, it is necessary to determine what is of personal significance and also learn to perceive the present 'reality' with clarity (ibid., 132). Those who achieve personal mastery are said to,

Have a special sense of purpose that lies behind their goals and visions.
For such a person, a vision is a calling rather than simply an idea. They see current reality as an ally, not an enemy. They have learned how to perceive and work with forces of change rather than resist those forces. They are deeply inquisitive, committed to continually seeing reality more and more accurately. They feel connected to others and to life itself. Yet they sacrifice none of their uniqueness. They feel as if they are part of a larger creative process, which they can influence but cannot unilaterally control (ibid., original emphasis).

From this statement, the similarities between personal mastery, self-actualisation and eudaemonic wellbeing are evident, as is the commonality with mindfulness and the imperative to perceive and approach life with curiosity, flexibility and non-judgment. Principles of the subjective milieu are also in evidence with references made to authenticity, expressivity, autonomy, and

meaningful connection with 'life itself'. In addition, this provides confirmation of the utility of 'spiritually-based' training in the workplace, which amalgamates 'work' and 'life', an association that was questioned in response to the facilitation of the empirical research and the mindfulness-based programme. Perhaps surprisingly, the workplace is an environment where these principles are considered significant, particularly within the context of executive and leadership development. The programme consolidates many aspects of the subjective turn, and significantly, the principles central to some forms of leadership theory (see Jaworski 1996; Boyatzis and McKee, 2005; Senge 2006; Cashman, 2008; Scharmer 2009)

6.9 Honouring Individuality, Creating Community

The table below delineates an application for mindfulness in a mundane context such as the workplace. It builds upon the notion of mindfulness as a form of emotional development that predominantly engenders effective intrapersonal communication. It delineates the aims, objectives and outcomes of personal development in the intrapersonal and interpersonal contexts and based upon the evidence accumulated thus far, speculates four interrelated phases of development that will lead to eudaemonic wellbeing. At the heart of the model is an emphasis on 'creating community' through a process of 'honouring individuality'. It draws upon the principles of the three-fold typology of applied mindfulness and emotional development, and incorporates the model of effective communication defined at the beginning of this chapter. The presentation of the research findings in table form helps to organise the evidence unpacked throughout this thesis. It consolidates and communicates the principles of the

turn to the self and the therapeutic imperative, the significance of emotional development, and the application of mindfulness practice in ‘secular’ personal development terms. It incorporates the principles of the initial MBSA programme and its utility in the formulation of a programme of mindfulness-based emotional development (MBED).

| Intrapersonal Development | | Interpersonal Development | |
|--|--|---|--|
| <i>Self-Awareness & Self-Reflective Practices</i> | <i>Mindfulness: Formal & Informal</i> | <i>Applied Mindfulness</i> | <i>Eudaemonic Wellbeing</i> |
| Intrapersonal communication: Somatic Cognitive Emotional Behavioural Linguistic Intuition A process of ‘critical’ reflection and awareness of the above aspects of self. Making self and lifestyle adjustments necessary for wellbeing and self-actualisation | Developing mindfulness skills: Non-judgment Presence Acceptance Focus Concentration Compassion Development of the skills through formal practice and applying them to self and lived experience. Developing emotional competence | Engaging in mindful interpersonal communication Living with integrity: not compromising personal values Creating outer harmony through inner peace Collaboration over competition Compassionate ‘action’ Honouring individuality Living authentically and responsibly | Accomplishing self mastery: Achieving personal potential Flourishing Creativity: making a positive contribution to the whole Living authentically Living with meaning and purpose Autonomy Effective interpersonal relationships Creating community through authenticity and trust |

Figure 4. Applied Mindfulness: A Four-Phase Model of Personal Development

6.9.1 Intrapersonal Development

The model is largely self-explanatory, but some elucidation is prudent. The table (figure 4) shows the structure of intrapersonal development and the principal elements of the three practices and their outcomes in relation to intrapersonal

and interpersonal development. The initial phase depends upon 'critical' self-awareness and self-reflection that results in personal change. The process necessitates the turn to the self, however becoming fixated at this phase of personal development could result in 'narcissistic' tendencies, as discussed above. Mindfulness practices both formal and informal guard against this. They constitute a more compassionate method of self-observation than the other methods, and significantly result in an increase in self-acceptance. Practice also develops emotional competence particularly the ability to manage subjective emotional states. From this, there is a progression to altruistic tendencies through the development of a more compassionate understanding of self and others, which results in empathy.

6.9.2 Interpersonal Development

Empathy is the bridge from the intrapersonal to the interpersonal modes of personal development. Concern for others underpins effective interpersonal communication skills, especially mindful listening. When mindfulness is applied to self and lived experience, there is greater awareness of the 'responsibility' to live with integrity and authenticity, knowing that this has a direct impact upon subjective wellbeing and consequently interpersonal relationships. The ability to honour individuality and therefore diversity ensures communion. The self-confidence and self-esteem that result from self-acceptance and deeper self-understanding are also likely to result in collaboration rather than competition. Indeed, self-efficacy is said to be a predictor of work-related performance (see Stajkovic and Luthans, 1998). The 'end-point' of personal development is eudaemonic wellbeing, which is understood to be the ultimate human

accomplishment. This subjective state ensures human flourishing and a positive contribution to the whole, not least in terms of the emotional energy field that one emanates. In its entirety, the process of personal development is 'therapeutic' or 'healing'. It improves physical health and psychological wellbeing through emotional development, initially through improved intrapersonal communication and subsequently through improved interpersonal communication.

6.10 Concluding Comments

This research initially focused on the turn to the self within Western culture, and the defining features of the subjectivisation thesis in order to determine the relevance of its principles within a 'mundane', that is, non-religious and non-clinical, context. Whilst there is a plethora of research that discusses the subjective turn and the value of the therapeutic, there is a paucity of empirical research to substantiate its significance, particularly the outcomes experienced by participants. Through extensive research this thesis has sought to redress the balance and provide evidence of the outcomes of the turn, through rich data gathered from qualitative and quantitative empirical research. In addition, the 'emotional linguistic' has been shown to demonstrate a non-partisan, inclusive language that transcends the boundaries of the religious, the spiritual and the psychological discourses. It not only provides a means with which to discuss 'psychospiritual' development in any context, it also provides a means of understanding the self in relation to lived experience, which is inevitably emotional.

The importance of the 'psychospiritual' therapeutic process within subjective wellbeing culture has been established, and the centrality of the emotions and emotional development to that process and the holistic milieu. Through a reading of Frank Furedi's (2004) *Therapy Culture* the cultural influence of emotionalism has been affirmed. The emotionally oriented therapeutic culture continues to be evident and increasingly so in relation to mindfulness practice, which encompasses the holistic principles previously established. Therefore, a programme of mindfulness-based self-awareness (MBSA), which enabled emotional development, was devised as part of the empirical research and as a primary vehicle for data collection. Specifically, the empirical research was undertaken to reveal the outcomes experienced by those participating in the course, in order to improve understanding of the significance of the milieu for its practitioners and to determine the utility of mindfulness practice within a 'mundane' context such as the workplace.

The research has identified the emotions as pivotal to the subjective turn and 'therapeutic' contexts in general. Whether approached from a psychotherapeutic or spiritual perspective, personal development inevitably requires emotional development. Indeed, 'spiritual' or 'psychological' development, both represent a 'path' or 'journey' to wellbeing that is emotionally oriented. Essentially, the therapeutic process requires the development of the sacred emotions and the amelioration of the profane emotions to achieve wellbeing. Indeed, solace can only be attained through the accomplishment of emotional competence that fosters emotional equanimity, which is an essential foundation for the achievement of human potential. Essentially, a reduction in

emotional stress, which is both physical and psychological, is required to 'function fully'.

The research has helped to identify a causal chain that connects self-awareness, mindfulness, intrapersonal communication, emotional development, interpersonal communication and eudaemonic wellbeing. The identification and elucidation of these phenomena demonstrates the process from self-awareness to subjective wellbeing. Specifically, it shows the importance of improved intrapersonal communication and the role of mindfulness, which improves self-awareness and fosters wellbeing through a process of emotional development. This, in turn, improves empathy and it is posited, leads to more effective interpersonal communication. Through unpacking these phenomena and delineating their practical application, it has been possible to determine the utility of mindfulness-based emotional development (MBED) for intrapersonal development, as proven. In addition, it is possible to see the wider implications for 'social intelligence', including interpersonal communication and relationships within the workplace. Effective interpersonal communication is dependent upon rapport, which is described as an interpersonal 'emotional match' that results from being 'in synch' with another (Goleman, 2007, 33). Specifically,

Whenever two people converse we can see this emotional minuet being played out in the dance of flashing eyebrows, rapid hand gestures, fleeting facial expressions, swiftly adjusted word pacing, shifts of gaze, and the like. Such synchrony lets us mesh and connect and, if we do so well, feel a positive emotional resonance with the other person (ibid.).

Rapport is a positive or 'sacred' emotional resonance that contributes to wellbeing and can be nurtured through mindfulness practice.

6.11 Recommendations for Future Research

The knowledge gained through this substantial body of work has been applied in the context of personal development, to demonstrate the efficacy of the MBED programme to improve health, wellbeing and productivity within the work environment. In addition, the research has demonstrated the utility of the programme for improving emotional competence, intrapersonal communication and eudaemonic wellbeing, and the outcomes of the empirical research combined with the theoretical account of the phenomena under investigation has resulted in the production of a model of personal development that can be utilised to conduct further research. In particular, it would be beneficial to test the theory that mindfulness-based emotional development improves interpersonal communication and relationships.

It would be beneficial to conduct a further study that incorporates the explanatory models and conclusions that have resulted from the analysis presented here. Although the *principles* of the MBED course remained consistent throughout the empirical research period, the course materials and practices were subject to an iterative process of revision to ensure the that optimum information and experience was available to the co-researchers, at that time. In the interest of consistency and with the increased understanding gained through the research process, it would be useful to augment these findings with further research utilising the theoretical models incorporated in Chapter 6.

There are several possible areas for future research that have emerged as a result of the study. Further research would be beneficial to provide greater understanding of the impact of mindfulness-based emotional development on interpersonal communication and particularly how that contributes to the creation of cohesive working relationships within teams. It would also be of interest to study further groups or individual leaders within the work place to determine the effects of mindfulness-based emotional development on interpersonal communication and the impact that has on leadership quality and experience. In addition to facilitating a one-day course, it would be useful to facilitate 'follow-up' meetings that incorporate further mindfulness practice and group support, to enable participants to consolidate and deepen their mindfulness practice over a protracted period of time. Another application would be to offer a residential retreat over a series of consecutive days. Through further research of this nature a useful comparison could then be made with the researcher's autoethnographical account elucidated above.

In pragmatic terms, the theoretical foundation that has been created and substantiated as a result of the empirical research has great potential to be applied as a method of personal development within myriad contexts in the pursuit of eudaemonic wellbeing, which is integral to optimal human experience. The results of the ASSET questionnaire showed an increase in productivity at work over the three-month period, with a rise from 26.5 per cent to 44.4 per cent of people reporting that they were 90 to 99 per cent productive at work. This suggests that improved health and wellbeing positively affects productivity at work. This research has been concerned primarily with subjective wellbeing, but it is understood that the *raison d'être* of the commercial world is

'productivity' and this would therefore provide an incentive to organisations to participate in future research.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Mindfulness Training Undertaken

2008, 18 -24 September, Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) Retreat: Holy Island, Scotland, with Pam Erdman and Alistair Wilson.

2008, 10-12 October, Order of Buddhist Contemplatives (OBC) introductory residential retreat: Throssel Hole, Northumbria.

2008-2009, weekly Soto Zen (OBC) meditation meetings in Preston: engaging in Serene Reflection meditation.

2009, January 8 – 26 February, MBSR 8-week course (including daily home practice): Lytham, Lancashire, with Madeleine Chappell (MA MSTAT).

2009, 23 February: facilitated mindfulness meditation session for the BHMA (British Holistic Medical Association) at The Christie, Manchester.

2009, 24 March – 4 April, *Vipassana* retreat: Dhamma Dipa Retreat Centre, Hereford.

2009, 24-26 April, 'Mindfulness and Beyond' Conference: Association of Core Process Psychotherapists, The Resource Centre, London.

2009, 9 May, Group Analysis North: Introduction to Working with Groups, The Red House, Salford.

2010, 13 – 18 August, Thich Nhat Hanh/Order of Interbeing, residential retreat: 'Living Peacefully, Living Mindfully', East Midlands Conference Centre, Nottingham University.

2010, 10 November, John Kabat-Zinn public talk: 'Living as if your moments really mattered', King's Centre, Oxford.

2010, 11-12 November, Jon Kabat-Zinn non-residential retreat: King's Centre, Oxford.

2012, 10 February, Mindfulness in the Workplace Conference: Oxford University.

2012, 31 March, Thich Nhat Hanh/Order of Interbeing 'Sit in peace': group meditation and public talk, Trafalgar Square, London.

2012, 5-10 April, Thich Nhat Hanh/Order of Interbeing: residential retreat 'Cultivating Happiness', East Midlands Conference Centre, Nottingham University.



**Division of Health Research
School of Health and Medicine
Lancaster University**

Application for Ethical Approval for Research

Instructions

1. Apply to the committee by submitting the completed application form, your full research proposal and all accompanying research materials including any:
 1. advertising materials
 2. participant information sheets,
 3. consent forms,
 4. questionnaires,
 5. interview schedules etc.
2. **Submit all the materials electronically** as a **single** email attachment
3. **Submit four collated and signed paper copies** of the full application materials. If the applicant is a student, the four paper copies of the application form must be signed by the Academic Supervisor.
4. Submit all applications, at least 14 days before the meeting, to:

Gill Betts
Division of Health Research
Lancaster University, LA1 4YT
g.betts@lancaster.ac.uk
5. Attend the committee meeting on the day that the application is considered.

| |
|--|
| 1. Title of Project: MINDFULNESS-BASED SELF-AWARENESS (MBSA) PROGRAMME |
| 2. If this is a student project, please indicate what type of project by ticking the relevant box: <input type="checkbox"/> DClinPsy SRP <input type="checkbox"/> DClinPsy Thesis <input type="checkbox"/> Masters dissertation <input type="checkbox"/> / PhD Thesis |
| 3. Type of study <input type="checkbox"/> / Involves human subjects <input type="checkbox"/> Involves documents only |

| |
|---|
| Applicant information |
| 4. Name of applicant/researcher: Janet Goss |
| 5. Appointment/position held by applicant: PhD: Health research (Yr. 2) |
| 6. Contact information for applicant: E-mail: j.goss@lancaster.ac.uk Telephone: 01253 731567 or 07855 491485 |

Address: The Studio, 29 North Clifton Street, Lytham, Lancashire FY8 5HW

7. Project supervisor(s), if different from applicant:

Name(s): Professor Susan Cartwright

E-mail(s): s.cartwright@lancaster.ac.uk

8. Appointment held by supervisor(s) and institution(s) where based:

Director, Centre for Organisational Health & Wellbeing, Division of Health Research, School of Health & Medicine.

9. Names and appointments of all members of the research team (including degree students where applicable)

Janet Goss, Researcher and Course Facilitator

The Project

NOTE: In addition to completing this form you must submit a detailed research protocol and all supporting materials.

10. Summary of research protocol in lay terms (maximum length 150 words).

The research will look at the consequences of engaging in an intervention designed to increase self-awareness. The intervention, a course in 'mindfulness-based self-awareness' (MBSA) will utilise meditation techniques and exercises in mindfulness-based creativity to explore the 'self'. This will include an exploration of cognitive, verbal and behavioural traits and look at ways that change may be instituted.

Participants will be required to take part in a **six-week pilot programme. Seven participants will meet weekly for a group workshop of up to two hours.** They will be required to submit electronic diary entries, outlining their life-experiences following the training. The project is particularly interested in how self-awareness affects relationships, with self and other, and also how it may affect their wellbeing.

The research project will help develop and refine the MBSA intervention and determine the most effective methods of delivery, through this pilot study.

11. Anticipated project dates

Start date: **15 January 2010** End date: **19 February 2010**

12. Please describe the sample of participants to be studied (including number, age, gender):

| |
|--|
| 6-7 participants, no specific requirements regarding age or gender, all Postgraduates at LU. |
| 13. How will participants be recruited and from where? Be as specific as possible. Recruited from Lancaster University Management School database of postgraduate students, by programme leaders, using the appended advertisement. Plus ad's placed on LUMS notice boards. And from an MBTI workshop I attended in Nov. for FST PG's. |
| 14. What procedure is proposed for obtaining consent? A consent form will be signed by voluntary participants, following a meeting to disseminate information for interested parties. |
| 15. What discomfort (including psychological), inconvenience or danger could be caused by participation in the project? Please indicate plans to address these potential risks. Reflexive learning may trigger past anxieties. If distressed during a session, participants will be able to speak with me in private and in confidence, if issues cannot be resolved in this way, they will be advised to contact Counselling Services at Lancaster University. No physical discomfort is anticipated |
| 16. What potential risks may exist for the research/research team? Please indicate plans to address such risks (for example, details of a lone worker plan). None anticipated |
| 17. What are the anticipated benefits from completion of the study? To trial an intervention that may improve wellbeing, self-leadership and communication at work |
| 18. Details of any incentives/payments (including out-of-pocket expenses) made to participants: None |
| 19. Briefly describe your data collection and analysis methods, and the rationale for their use A diary method will be used to collect data and this will also serve as a reflexive tool for participants. A research journal will be kept to monitor the researcher/facilitators experience and to record participant observations for triangulation purposes. Grounded theory will be used to analyse data, in order to allow theory to emerge from the data as it is collected and to revise the training programme if required. |
| 20. Describe the involvement of users/service users in the study Participants will be required to learn mindfulness meditation techniques, take part in reflexive exercises, including arts-based exercises. Learn to be open and curious within the 'self-paradigm' and to discuss issues that may arise from undertaking the work, including |

acceptance, non-judgment and present-moment awareness – all aspects of mindfulness practice.

21. What plan is in place for the storage of data (electronic, digital, paper, etc.)? Please ensure that your plans comply with the Data Protection Act 1998.
Storage of paper documents will be in a locked filing cabinet at my home address, **these will be destroyed upon completion of the project.** Electronic data will be password protected and kept for five years from completion of the project, in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

22. Will audio or video recording take place? / no audio video
If yes, what arrangements have been made for audio/video data storage? At what point in the research will tapes/digital recordings/files be destroyed?

23. What are the plans for dissemination of findings from the research?
The development of conference papers and leadership journal articles. Further workshops/corporate training.

19. What particular ethical problems, not previously noted on this application, do you think there are in the proposed study?

There may be a potential conflict of interests as the researcher is also the intervention facilitator. This will call for heightened self-awareness on the part of the researcher to be transparent about the possible influence of personal prejudice arriving from preconceptions, borne out of expectations and past experiences of similar work.

Signatures:

Applicant:

Date:

Project Supervisor:

Date:

7. Appendices

Appendix I: Guidelines for electronic diary entries

Appendix II: Advertising poster

Appendix III: Programme information sheet

Appendix IV: Researcher's background

Appendix V: Participant consent form

Appendix I

Mindfulness-Based Self-Awareness: Guidelines for Electronic Diary Entries

1. How do I submit my diary entries?

Diary entries will be submitted electronically, by email to j.goss@lancaster.ac.uk either as a straightforward email or as an attachment

2. How often will I be required to submit a diary entry?

Group A: following each day of the retreat (5 entries)

Group B: weekly, following your one to one training/coaching session (up to 6 entries)

Group C: during the week following your one-day training session (1 entry)

All Groups: two further diary submissions are required, at monthly intervals following training (i.e. for two months after your particular training programme has finished)

N.B: The final agreed requirement was 5 weekly submissions for both the pilot study and the one-day workshops

3. What shall I write about?

I am interested in your experiences of increased self-awareness. If you notice any differences in your self, your relationships with friends, family or colleagues, your experiences at work or in your personal life? Differences in your thinking, speech or behaviour may be recorded and your emotional, cognitive and bodily responses to them. You can give specific examples and/or you can summarise your feelings, as best you understand them.

4. How much shall I write?

Be spontaneous and trust your intuition on this one. If there are many things that you feel are noteworthy, then please include them. If it occurs to you to include something, even if you are not sure why, then please include it. Diary submissions may vary in length and rather than fulfilling a 'word count quota', write what comes to mind.

Any Further Questions, Please Contact Me

Jan Goss
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Mindfulness-Based Self-Awareness (MBSA)

“Gaining self-awareness means working to understand how one derives and makes meaning of the world around us based on introspective, self-reflective testing of our own hypotheses and self-schema” (Gardner, Avolio et al., 2005).

Self-Awareness is essential for ‘Emotional Intelligence’ (Goleman, Boyatzis & McKee, 2002) and ‘Authentic Leadership’ (Avolio and Gardner, 2005). Awareness is also pivotal in ‘Open Source Leadership’ (Gadman & Cooper, 2009).

As part of a Doctoral Research Project I am looking for POSTGRADUATE participants to take part in:

**SIX, TWO-HOUR ‘SELF-AWARENESS
TRAINING’ GROUP WORKSHOPS
WEEKLY
FROM 15 JANUARY - 19 FEBRUARY 2010**

If you are interested in finding out more

Please Attend the Meeting in the Management School
Room B36

MONDAY 7th DECEMBER at 2pm

or Contact me:

j.goss@lancaster.ac.uk or 01253 731567 or 07855 491485

Jan Goss,
Researcher: PhD Health Research,
Centre for Organisational Health & Wellbeing
Division of Health Research
School of Health & Medicine
Lancaster University

Appendix III

Mindfulness-Based Self-Awareness: Programme Information

The programme combines ‘mindfulness’ practices, creativity, discussion and keeping a written journal. NO previous experience in any of these practices is required.

Participants will receive instruction in mindfulness meditation and be given the opportunity to practice within the sessions. Practices include sitting meditation, walking meditation and eating meditation. Mindfulness requires noticing what is happening in the present moment with acceptance and non-judgment. It is a simple process to learn and like any new skill, it requires practice to master.

In addition, basic creative exercises such as collage-making will be used to explore various concepts, investigate fresh perspectives and to broaden understanding. For example, concepts such as ‘creativity’, ‘self’ and ‘authenticity’ may be explored in this way.

The purpose of using mindfulness techniques within this leadership programme is to increase self-awareness. It is the effects of increased self-awareness in your daily life that the research seeks to discern and this is what you will be required to monitor and record in your journal submissions (see *Guidelines for Electronic Diary Entries* for further information).

The journal-keeping may be a valuable tool for you as participant and co-researcher, it will enable you to reflect on your experiences and your cognitive and emotional responses. The research seeks to reveal how the training may be applicable in your life therefore your thoughts and feelings, are of value to the research project. As researcher I am interested in how the training has practical value for you as an individual, as such there are no right or wrong applications or answers.

In addition to completing a written journal, you will be required to complete part four of the ASSET questionnaire. This is ‘an organisational stress screening tool’ and part four is comprised of 23 questions to be answered by ticking boxes, regarding ‘Your Health’, two identical questionnaires will be completed by each participant, ‘pre’ and ‘post’ training.

All data offered by participants will be confidential, anonymity cannot be guaranteed in the ‘writing up’ process, but every effort will be made to protect individuals’ identity. You have the right to withdraw from the training at any time, however if journal entries have been submitted they will be eligible for analysis.

Additional Information

The term ‘leadership’, in the context of this study, refers to self-leadership.

This is a research project and the journal submissions will provide vital feedback on your experience of taking part in the programme and must be completed in order for you to participate in the training.

You are able to withdraw from the project at any time, but any information previously submitted, may be used in the analysis and ‘writing up’ phase of the study.

Confidentiality is assured within the sessions, but if information considered to be a ‘risk issue’ is disclosed by you, it may be referred to an appropriate third party.

If for any reason you feel distressed during any of the sessions please tell me, you may speak to me in private and in confidence. The training is NOT personal therapy however and if we are unable to resolve any issue, you may wish to contact:

Counselling Services, B105 Furness College, Lancaster University. Tel:01524 592690

Email: counselling@lancaster.ac.uk

<http://www.lancs.ac.uk/student-services/counselling>

The information gathered from you using the ASSET questionnaire, ‘pre’ and ‘post’ training, will be gathered for comparison purposes in order to ascertain any changes in ‘your health’. It is being used to measure how effective, if at all, the training is at improving general wellbeing. There is no ‘score’ required by you in order to participate and none that will exclude you from taking part in the training.

Any Further Questions, Please Contact Me

Jan Goss. Researcher, PhD: Health Research, Centre for Organizational Health & Wellbeing, School of Health & Medicine, Division of Health Research, Lancaster University. Email: j.goss@lancaster.ac.uk Tel: 01253 731567 or 07855 491485.

Appendix IV

Mindfulness-Based Self-Awareness: Background Information

I have 12 years personal experience of practising meditation and have taken part in many different types of retreat during this time and I began practising Hatha yoga twenty-five years ago. I run a weekly meditation group and have experience of facilitating retreats for between 1 and 3 people at a time, within my home. I have a Higher Education Diploma in Home Economics (Salford, 1981), a first class BA (Hons) in photography (Lancaster, 2003) and an MA in Visual Design as Creative Practice (Lancaster, 2007). I undertook a two-year Art Psychotherapy Foundation course (South Trafford, 2003-5) and I have been working part time since 2005 in various mental health settings using these skills.

During the first eight months of Doctoral study (spent in the Religious Studies department at Lancaster University) I conducted ethnographic research through participation in a variety of retreats that focussed on 'mindfulness' practice. Time was spent as a participant observer in both religious and non-religious retreat settings, courses and conferences to gain understanding and experience of the practice.

All of the above are practices in mindfulness.

Any Further Questions, Please Contact Me

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Appendix V

Consent Form

Mindfulness-Based Self-Awareness (MBSA) Programme

I have read the information sheets for this research project and I understand what they say.

I agree to participate in the training programme, submit feedback as requested and complete two questionnaires, all of which will be used for the purposes of this research.

I understand that I may pullout of this research at any time but that, if I have already contributed feedback, it may not be possible to withdraw that information.

I have had an opportunity to ask questions about the research and I understand that the researcher is available should I wish to ask her further questions about it. (Contact details are on the information sheet).

Please print your name here:

Please sign your name here:

Date:

5 February 2010

Week 3 Session Plan: Authenticity

- **Guided mindfulness practice (15 mins)**
- **Toronto Mindfulness Scale (TMS)**
- **What 'Authenticity' means to you (roll)**
- **'Being Authentic' handout**
- **Draw: 3 things that are important to you (wax)**
- **Show and tell: beautiful picture**
- **Mindfulness practice**
- **Read: The Invitation**
- **Handout: EI article**

General Course Observations:

- Both groups drew very small pictures despite having big paper
- The use of wax maybe determines this (size) and the use of stick people (I may have suggested stick people) – maybe use paints some time (room has no sink though)
- Maybe there is some inhibition using the communal drawing 'roll'
- Maybe just unease at sharing
- I feel I need to 'draw' people in to participate more, rather than me talking so much
- Maybe we need to discuss journal entries/the week more to encourage 'sharing' ethos
- I also suggested they comment on what was useful for them during the sessions/and in the subsequent week, in their journals
- All seemed to like talking about their 'beautiful picture', all became animated – this perhaps works well with '3 things that are important to you drawing exercise
- It'll be good to relate info to leadership context with the next group I work with
- This group is diverse and therefore not as 'homogenous' in some ways – ie I can't relate to them all in one way
- This feels a bit limiting – but has also added variety and different viewpoints

Observations: AM Group Week 3 (5.2.10)

- I made the connection between happiness, authenticity and beauty
- Each brought in a beautiful photo: FW = her cat EB = her and her dad
- Neither were aesthetically beautiful
- We talked about conformity to stereotypes of beauty/media
- Being authentic = beauty

- FW talked about outer things “assets” being ok, home, work etc, but questioned whether that necessarily equated to her feeling happy
- EB: talked of the fleeting nature of happiness – described happiness as an inner space that needed to be filled from outside (the heart – my observation)
- I reasoned that this is potentially exhausting – needing to fill an inner space through external resources
- I can see how ‘seeds’ are planted: bottom line of “being Authentic” handout was ‘happiness’: FW listed this as one of her 3 important things
- FW: could see how her own happiness was something she neglected
- FW: also ‘forgot’ to draw herself in her family group, did so retrospectively
- I asked if this was familiar “forgetting’ to include/tend to her self – she said yes
- FW acknowledged she wanted greater self-esteem and confidence, but not sure how to achieve it
- (being authentic may provide a way)
- I emphasised the need for patience, esp. with self and that change is incremental – but awareness is the key to making it happen
- EB: talked about her dad’s spiritual/philosophical influence and their relationship – being more intellectual
- Relationship with her mother – more tactile
- Session didn’t seem to flow as well, but maybe I make that judgment based on the increase in silence, and judging that as not so good
- I have to become more comfortable with/open to silence in the group
- Both struggled to make notes on what ‘authenticity’ meant/represents
- FW: didn’t know much about EI
- FW: in 2009 her mum’ cancer, dad’s stroke, boyfriend finished with her, and her act died after 14 yrs – what resilience
- FW making lots of notes as always – does this and doesn’t necessarily seem to listen to the others
- EB, doesn’t make notes
- Fw pointed out that on a retreat you have someone there to help you with whatever ‘comes up’ as opposed to having to go off and deal with stuff your self (retreat may be more intense though)
- Read “authenticity’ leaflet aloud, won’t this pm

Observations: PM Group Wk 3: Authenticity

- Different groups, different priorities re ‘3 important things’: AM group was work/passion
- All said family and people –I’m aware this wasn’t one of mine when I first did the exercise!
- There was panic in the room (Tom) in particular expressed this, not sure if it was the drawing or the subject matter – I must ask these things
- We talked about journal entries and completing it everyday CM said she’d try it for a week. TH thought he would, but laughed
- Beautiful pictures were again very personal

- SM 'forgot' her picture – speaks to me of her 'privacy' issues. She described a feeling of being in nature, as revelatory – doesn't do the 'nature thing'

Reflexive Observations

- I am realising my assumptions around what I think others know
- I need to be more comfortable with silence
- I'm aware there is a difference in being 'happy about' and 'happy in' / or despite of something (an experience) – thinking of FW mum situation
- Although the session seemed to lack flow, it has maybe taught me more (about myself as facilitator)
- First time of looking at authenticity in a group – new for me and them
- The collaboration of minds in these sessions is intellectually and emotionally stimulating
- I feel more relaxed as a facilitator and look fwd to the unknown aspects of the meeting – less anxious/less toilet-making
- 2nd mindfulness practice I did with just a couple of reminders – mostly silence/little instruction
- May do without bells next week, to see the difference
- Bells foster dependency/reliance on them, that participants won't have when I'm not there and leading
- Catherine at Cornerstone this week said: it was like a séance (lights down)/sort of spiritual (bells) – she's perhaps voicing what others in other groups are feeling but perhaps not saying (ie non-conscious)
- Re: FW saying on retreat you are more supported: maybe I should have made myself more available or verbalised this ie me being first port of call in a crisis
- Maybe compile a list of thoughts on/around happiness for next week:
- Happiness/acceptance/gratitude/+ve psychology/reframing (look at relationship between these?)
- Next week: give an example of when you've reframed something from –ve to +ve
- PM Group – I was tired and maybe influenced the group with my lack of energy
- Perhaps all feel this way on a Friday
- I'm really aware of/contemplating my discomfort with the silence. I don't feel others feel my discomfort or are as uncomfortable as I am
- I guess I feel a pressure on me to 'do'/facilitate/fill the gaps, or actually to not 'allow' any gaps, but when I do, participants often speak
- I hadn't thought it gelled so well, ie – the 'beautiful picture seemed out of place, maybe I put too much emphasis on connecting everything together.
- Maybe things are connecting for them in ways I don't necessarily notice/see

Appendix 4: Example of Initial Coding of Participant Diary

Saturday

I spent much of the day shopping, something which I hadn't done for a while. I usually end up feeling a bit stressed with the crowds so I made an effort to (16)try and just enjoy what I was doing and not be too affected by my surroundings 9. *[[informal mindfulness practice]]*. Once I stopped enjoying it, I went home, even though I hadn't found what I was looking for (19)*[[15b. context related psych flexibility]]. I was a bit more productive than usual *[[13b. noting change has occurred]]*, as I usually end up wandering all over the place, only to end up going back to the first shop I went (22)to. I tried to go with my instincts, which definitely helped my decision-making 1. *[[awareness of inner experience]]*.

(24)I felt a bit low in the evening *[[10a. psychological stress]]* and was thinking about my job quite a lot. I'm usually able to switch off from work on (26)the weekend but I've been thinking a lot about what I want out of my life over the next few years *[[13a. identifying need for change]]*, and (28)dissatisfaction at work contributes to this. I found it difficult to apply the practices 7. *[[gaining understanding from experience]]* we had discussed, especially as I was thinking about my future and aspects of my life which I wanted to change.

Sunday

(4)Sunday was quite relaxing *[[8a. experiencing relaxation]]*. I had quite a few jobs to do and was able to enjoy them, without thinking too much about what the next job was and whether I could be doing something more interesting instead 9. *[[informal mindfulness practice]]*.

(8)I was a bit impatient with my partner in the morning and was probably less tolerant and more self absorbed than usual*[[1a. emotional awareness]]*. I

(10) did think about this afterwards and tried to be calmer and more accepting of our differences 5. *[[acceptance]] when we met up again later in the day. (12) I did some meditative practice 8. *[[formal mindfulness practice]] on the Sunday evening as I started to think about work again. It made me a lot more relaxed and able to enjoy the evening more *[[5a. experiencing relaxation]].

Monday

I was at Hooper Street offices all day on Monday. I dislike working there for a number of reasons, and find it very depressing *[[2a. self in relation/social]] (18) *[[10a. psychological stress]]. For most of the morning I was feeling fairly negative and was a bit tense about a few things. I was aware of my feelings *[[1a. emotional awareness]] and did not really want to think about the mindfulness practice as I felt justified in feeling the way I did. Once I'd got (22) a few things out of the way however, I made an effort not to think too much about my surroundings and what was coming up later in the week and (24) found that the day went a lot quicker and I was more productive *[[13d. (25) noting +ve change at work]]. My meetings went well and I went home feeling a lot more positive than I did when I left the house *[[12a. hedonic wellbeing]].

(1) I did start to get quite stressed in the evening when sorting out bills and (2) money *[[10a. psychological stress]] and in turn ended up making my partner slightly stressed as well, which wasn't helpful *[[7a. gaining self-(4) understanding]]. This is something I need to think about as it is the one thing which I often worry about and have little control over.

Appendix 5: Numeric Summary of Themes

| | | Inner awareness | Outer awareness | Kindness | Curiosity | Acceptance | Relaxation | Understanding | Formal mfn | Informal practice | Stress | Physical WB | Psychol WB | Change | MBSA Course | Psych.Flex |
|----|----|-----------------|-----------------|----------|-----------|------------|------------|---------------|------------|-------------------|--------|-------------|------------|--------|-------------|------------|
| No | Id | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
| 1 | AL | 14 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 7 | 0 | 5 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 5 | 2 |
| 2 | BE | 4 | 5 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 0 |
| 3 | HT | 6 | 10 | 1 | 4 | 7 | 4 | 3 | 1 | 5 | 4 | 0 | 5 | 9 | 0 | 1 |
| 4 | MC | 2 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 4 | 7 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 0 |
| 5 | MS | 7 | 4 | 2 | 5 | 2 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 4 | 7 | 2 | 1 | 7 | 2 | 4 |
| 6 | WF | 16 | 5 | 1 | 9 | 16 | 8 | 9 | 1 | 9 | 3 | 0 | 10 | 9 | 1 | 1 |
| 7 | BR | 9 | 4 | 0 | 7 | 0 | 13 | 1 | 4 | 5 | 19 | 0 | 3 | 13 | 8 | 2 |
| 8 | GM | 10 | 5 | 7 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 10 | 8 | 6 | 2 | 4 | 12 | 2 | 3 |
| 9 | HJ | 8 | 6 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 7 | 4 | 13 | 15 | 7 | 8 | 7 | 22 | 2 | 0 |
| 10 | MA | 6 | 6 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 9 | 5 | 14 | 13 | 5 | 1 | 5 | 10 | 3 | 0 |
| 11 | ND | 0 | 2 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 6 | 3 | 7 | 1 | 2 | 8 | 1 | 0 |
| 12 | PM | 7 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 8 | 3 | 1 |
| 13 | MK | 10 | 12 | 3 | 6 | 9 | 9 | 22 | 3 | 7 | 14 | 6 | 9 | 19 | 2 | 3 |
| 14 | OP | 5 | 8 | 1 | 15 | 5 | 2 | 5 | 0 | 4 | 8 | 7 | 8 | 12 | 1 | 0 |
| 15 | PE | 2 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 6 | 0 | 10 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| 16 | RK | 3 | 4 | 4 | 6 | 3 | 4 | 7 | 5 | 9 | 12 | 2 | 3 | 9 | 2 | 0 |
| 17 | UC | 12 | 13 | 10 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 9 | 1 | 1 | 19 | 3 | 4 | 7 | 2 | 0 |
| 18 | MJ | 1 | 4 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 6 | 1 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 1 | 0 |
| 19 | MS | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 20 | NM | 1 | 19 | 1 | 5 | 5 | 12 | 15 | 0 | 12 | 13 | 9 | 19 | 18 | 7 | 5 |
| 21 | SK | 3 | 24 | 6 | 2 | 4 | 8 | 15 | 1 | 7 | 12 | 3 | 10 | 18 | 2 | 2 |
| 22 | BK | 3 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 1 | 1 |
| 23 | CA | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 1 |
| 24 | FC | 7 | 6 | 5 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 9 | 0 | 1 | 9 | 0 | 0 |
| 25 | HK | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 5 | 0 | 1 | 10 | 2 | 1 | 5 | 0 | 1 |
| 26 | PH | 2 | 6 | 5 | 2 | 1 | 5 | 3 | 0 | 2 | 12 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 0 | 1 |
| 27 | RJ | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 5 | 1 | 2 |
| 28 | SV | 11 | 5 | 2 | 9 | 4 | 3 | 14 | 1 | 5 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 17 | 2 | 1 |
| 29 | TM | 6 | 1 | 0 | 8 | 2 | 0 | 9 | 0 | 6 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 18 | 1 | 3 |
| 30 | WG | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 31 | AS | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 32 | CS | 10 | 6 | 4 | 28 | 5 | 3 | 18 | 0 | 7 | 9 | 4 | 11 | 12 | 2 | 3 |
| 33 | CJ | 3 | 14 | 3 | 3 | 8 | 4 | 9 | 0 | 8 | 8 | 15 | 12 | 5 | 0 | 1 |
| 34 | HS | 5 | 6 | 1 | 8 | 5 | 2 | 13 | 9 | 5 | 8 | 4 | 4 | 22 | 8 | 4 |
| 35 | TE | 3 | 16 | 4 | 5 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 1 | 7 | 1 | 4 | 6 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Appendix 6: An Example of Key Themes Extracted from Participant Journals

Key Themes:

| ID | A: Awareness | B: Mindfulness Traits | C: Mfness Practice | D: Change | E: Stress | F: Wellbeing | Other |
|-----------------------|---|--|--|---|---|---|--|
| 1:LA 2k words | Think about SA when 'Stuck' in your life (3) "I am quite a sensitive person" (19) "I kept going in the wrong direction until my body clearly told me" (22)...stop running & think (24) Feeling lonely (27) Introspection is useful but difficult (30) | Acceptance making life Easier (50) PMA of sun on skin on train (83) Curiosity re place(87) MBSA course showed need for relaxation (121) | Focused on breath to aid sleep...more practice required (71) PMA difficult but really helped(72) Having a weekly course helps practice(89) Clearly seeing the benefits of SA(92) Empties your head & "enjoy one simple thing at a time" (95) Eating mindfully: her body may "recommend" a better diet(111) Weekly practice | Gaining perspective & feeling all's ok (56) SA not the same as "being...capable of changing (65) Noting need to eat mindfully(80) Taking time to Read(114) Overcoming guilty Feelings(134) | "I am REALLY stressed" (55) Trouble sleeping(68) "I struggle to calm down" (116) | | Confusion over What mfness is (102) Makes a point about judging oneself in a +ve way, not being mfness (156) Questions the lack of spontaneity of emotion due to practice |
| 2:EB 1300 words | "During that first session I experienced some resistance"(1) SA of back tension During mfness practice(14) Valuing the group/Social interaction (48) (55) Noting commonality within the group re. feelings(71) Feeling connected to the earth while walking(105) | Noting that being creative can be relaxing(41) Feeling relaxed during & after the sessions (65) PMA: forgot about being late(102) Connection to the earth feeling calming(107) | Hard to relax using formal practice (5) "I managed to really focus and enjoyed it" (10) Easier with practice 2 nd time(21) Mindful use of the breath (27) Felt benefit of walking meditation en route to class(98) | Consciously slowing down (33) | "feeling more stressed than usual" (92) | Enjoyed feelings of "escape and fullness"(24) Feeling grateful for friends & family(84) | No impact outside of session -wk 2(69) |
| 3:TH 3500 words | SA of feeling low due to alcohol consumption(12) SA of own expectations to feel happier with achievements (20) Emotions more even (29) SA of unhelpful thoughts(41) More aware of ability To influence others (45) Appreciative Attitude to nature (155) SA of sleeping less Before p/t job(180) SA of "perfectionist" Traits (190) SA of "need[ing] lists Of tasks"(198) SA of laziness & lack Of motivation(245) Valuing social network(252) Deep self-reflection Re. his future/options | PMA after practice(1) "I felt completely calm...there was no need to talk or fill the silence I was content"(3) Acceptance re: crashing car (24) Awareness of "going with the flow"(32) Acceptance: on passing Or failing tests(139) Relaxing drive (160) "more relaxed than usual" under pressure (172) Curious about less Sleep before p/t job (182) Self-acceptance and Doing "well enough" Being ok (195) "I certainly did my best"(279) Relating gratitude to a Work context ie saying Thank you(11:21) | Acknowledging Need to do one Thing at once(83) Did mindful eating Realized he does Savour food(87) Aware of unmindful driving and coming back to PMA(99) Meditating before Going out to act as Transition(102) Recognizing badminton as a form of mfness practice(132) | Joined the gym to get fit(34) Needs more sleep (37) (78) After mfness Practice "Sorted a few things out"(73) Flexibility re out-Comes of tests (142) Stopping drinking Alcohol for a month(149) Need to do more Work earlier(201) Intention to add Meditation breaks To revision schedule(218) "I should look at other aspects" of his life/learning (276) | "I've been feeling a little stressed"(70) "felt stressed for the first time in a while (125) | Felt calmer and more in control(7) Feeling better for [me time](67) Feeling "relatively" confident(215) Feeling grateful (248) Appreciating self & effort. Feeling motivated(262) thinking about doing a PhD(291) Expressing gratitude re his position in life & options(11:13) | Questioning balanced emotions, likes highs and lows(31) Looking fwd to The Fri session (91) Thinking that Forward planning isn't Mfness (256) "just a few thoughts about the last 10 days or so"(269) "I guess beggars can't be choosers" --ve connotation (288) |

| | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|---|--|---|--|--|---|---|
| | (p.10-11) | | | | | | |
| 4:CM 2100 words | "I guess you can only begin to understand other people is you understand yourself" (1:19) Understanding the "tricky part" of practice as remaining in PMA, without past/future thinking coming in(2:3) Noticed not wanting Chocolate cake(2:19) Noting & overcoming discomfort with silence(3:21) Thinking 'about' mindfulness Practices(4:2) Aware of valuing Authenticity(4:21) Acknowledging difficulty of self-gratitude (5:17) Making sense of self thru reflecting(6:20) Been easiest attempt to stop smoking(7:13) | Curiosity re creativity: Relating creativity to Research & theorizing (3:8) Visual appreciation of nature(5:1) Being able to be in PMA and not react so much(5:8) Curiosity about self & Any changes as a result Of the course "in the way I 'am'"(6:1) Curious: "how mindfulness Fits into my life"(6:13) Curious whether mindfulness Techniques aided the Process of quitting Smoking(7:10) | Making conscious Effort to focus on Present(2:7) "just set off and enjoyed each bit as it came" re bike ride (2:10) "fun" and "spontaneity"(2:13) introducing small meditations into working day(2:14) Unguided meditations more difficult (3:2) conscious use of breathing during the day(3:13) Mindful eating with Partner(3:17) "just focusing on the tastes of the food-not something I have ever experienced"(3:19) Finding methods Of practice that Work for her(4:10) Combining walking /exercising& breathing(4:13) Mindful listening to Music(5:19) | Letting more silences into the day (3:23) Resolved to play Guitar more & think before speaking(5:13) Has & will integrate principles Into her life(6:18) | | Realised the importance Of nature in her Life(4:27) Realized importance Of relaxation & Fun(5:4) Using mindfulness to Concentrate on PM & reduce stresses consciously (6:8) Found collage relaxing(7:25) Found gratitude Journal writing to Be good - potentially "have quite a Big impact"(8:4) "the course has been a rewarding thing to do"(8:11) The course has "reminded me of a lot of things & given me a few new tools/techniques" (8:13) | Understanding Benefits of Small meditations during day for "sustaining attention in the long run"(2:17) May look into Reiki again(7:3) Looked at Tao & angel cards (?) Questioning Usefulness of Collage - but Enjoyable(7:21) |

Appendix 7: The Weekly MBSA Session Plans

15 January 2010

Week 1 Session Plan: Self & Awareness

- Sign consent forms
- Complete initial ASSET questionnaire
- Get tel. No.'s
- Distribute hard copy of 'Info for participants' and 'Diary entry guidelines'
- Short breathing practice: write down the experience
- Introduce our selves: why we're participating
- Set and write down 'ground rules'
- Explore 'self-paradigm': write on the group journal (wallpaper roll)
- Share thoughts/ideas
- Explore Awareness: List of '11 Awarenesses' – read out/discuss
- Body scan: discuss body awareness
- Discuss Journal feedback guidelines
- 1st journal submission by Wed evening – to enable me to read them by Friday
- Read & distribute 'Tasting Mindfulness' poem
- Asked them to text me if they can't attend (last minute)

22 January 2010

Week 2 Session Plan: Creativity

- 5 min sitting: no guidance, just bells
- Write down in journal how that experience was
- Group sharing on the week: feedback/practices/journals
- Distribute 'self-paradigm' leaflet and discuss
- What do we think creativity is? (group journal)
- Look at ARC of 'conscious creativity' and discuss – awareness/responsibility/change
- Read out quotes from handout and discuss
- Poetry writing exercise (with angel cards)
- Mindfulness practice – sitting/breath
- Read Freedom & Responsibility (Tao of Leadership) – handout
- Handout mindfulness article from BMJ
- Next week: bring in a 'beautiful picture'

5 February 2010

Week 3 Session Plan: Authenticity

- Guided mindfulness practice (15 mins)
- Toronto Mindfulness Scale (TMS)

- What 'Authenticity' means to you (roll)
- 'Being Authentic' handout
- Draw: 3 things that are important to you (wax)
- 'Show and tell': beautiful picture
- Mindfulness practice
- Read: The Invitation
- Handout: EI article

12 February 2010

Week 4 Session Plan: Connectivity & Gratitude

- Mindfulness practice (10 mins)
- EI handout – any questions from last week
- Hand out raisins; explore with all the senses, eat mindfully
- Raisin timeline: everything/person/event that brought it here
- Goethe quote: connectivity/synergy/cause & effect
- How course content hangs together?
- SA exercise: What I'm aware I do/don't do & would like to do differently: make an action plan for change
- Gratitude Exercise: 5 things I'm grateful for about my self – qualities etc
- Gratitude 'Journal' handout: 5 things per day for a week
- Mindfulness practice (10-15 mins)
- Read out 'Monk Who Sold His Ferrari' passage, and hand out

19 February 2010

Week 5 Session Plan: Mindfulness & Energy

- Sitting practice (5-10 mins)
- Reflections on 'Gratitude Journal'
- What is 'mindfulness'
- Mindfulness quotes handout
- Stand in 'the mountain' sense energy/ balance of the body/feet
- Walking meditation
- Mind/body connection
- Sensing energy in the hands
- Chakras handout
- Inner body scan: bring awareness into the abdomen (25 mins)

26 February 2010

Week 6: Review of Learning

- Sitting practice (10 mins)
- TMS – compare to 1st one
- ASSET – compare to 1st one
- Has understanding of 'the self' shifted?
- Has self-understanding shifted

- Look at the 'whole self'
- Complete 'wheel of life' exercise
- Make a 'whole-self' portrait in collage using magazine pics and words
- Present to the group
- Mindfulness practice (5 mins)
- Mantra – Louise Hay affirmations - only did with FW
- Rumi 'The Guest House' – didn't have time

Appendix 8: One-Day Course Handouts

Mindfulness-Based Self-Awareness

A One-Day Workshop

Facilitator: Jan Goss

The 'Self'

Covey (1989) states: "We are not our feelings. We are not our moods. We are not even our thoughts. The very fact that we can think about these things separates us from them."

The Buddha (500 BCE) said: "We are what we think. All that we are arises with our thoughts. With our thoughts we make the world"

Cupitt (1980) writes: "...self is a process of becoming, a 'relation'. It is self-defining, generating its own knowledge and its own destiny of becoming a fully-achieved, conscious and autonomous spiritual subject"

"One's self-system is not a one-dimensional whole, but rather a complex, interconnected and multidimensional phenomenon" (Hoyle, Kernis, Leary and Baldwin, 1999)

The 'phenomenal self' is described as a person's awareness, arising out of interactions with one's environment, beliefs, values, attitudes, the links between them and their implications for one's behaviour (Jones and Gerard, 1967)

"Healthy development is not about creating a single 'self' that is a homogenised, uniform entity. Rather, healthy development involves coming to acknowledge, accept, and then to integrate one's various states: to discover how disparate states can link, and even collaborate as a unified whole composed of many parts" (Siegel, 2010)

"If we put the mind and the body back together so that we are just one person again, then wherever we put the mind, we would also put the body. If the mind is in a truly healthy place, the body would be as well - and so we could change our physical health by changing our minds." (Langer, 2009)

The 'Authentic Self'

Scharmer (2009) makes the distinction between "self: current self, ego" and "Self: one's highest future possibility; higher self" - Describing the "authentic or essential Self" as "the embodiment of an emerging or different kind of self"

Harter (2002) states that authenticity is reliant upon 'knowing oneself' and 'being true to oneself', 'owning one's personal experiences, be they thoughts, emotions, needs, wants, preferences, or beliefs'

Maslow (1968) speaks of a "real self", which implies the existence of a false or 'inauthentic' self

Rogers (1967) implies that there is an authentic self by asking "Who am I really? How can I get in touch with this real self, underlying all my surface behaviour? How can I become myself?"

According to Bugental (1965) authenticity is " a way of being in the world in which one's being is in harmony with the being of the world itself"

Authentic leaders are said to be "transparent, do not withhold information...they build employee confidence and self-efficacy, they create hope and optimism and they strengthen resilience" (Dasborough and Ashkanasy, 2005)

Self-awareness is essential for 'authentic-self development'.

Being Authentic:

- Requires that we **acknowledge** all aspects of our 'self'
- And that we **integrate** all aspects of our self
- It requires **acceptance** of ALL that we are
- And **not judging** what and who we are
- But facing, **honestly** the 'truth' of who we are
- It requires **openness**
- Openness to our **self** and openness with **others**
- And this may increase our sense of **vulnerability**
- It requires therefore, that we **know our 'self'**
- That we find our **inner knowing**
- And that we **listen** to our inner knowing
- That we **trust** our inner voice
- And feel **confident to express** our 'true' (authentic) self
- We have to **distinguish intuition** from our 'stories'
- This requires self knowledge and **self-understanding** gained from self-awareness
- It requires that we are genuine, real, **congruent**
- That our actions and words reflect our **beliefs and values**
- It is therefore an **ethical way of 'being'** in the world
- The **inner** aspects of our self, reflected in our **outer** 'being'
- A **transparency**
- Transparency requires knowing our **boundaries**
- An intuitive knowledge of 'when' and 'what' it is **appropriate to express**
- And an intuitive knowing of when it is **not appropriate to express** our 'self'
- That self-expression is our **individuality**
- Our **creativity**
- Our **self**
- It requires **confidence**
- And **self-trust**
- Sometimes it involves 'informed' **risk-taking**
- And the **courage** that that requires
- It develops **empathy**
- An understanding and a **feeling** for individuality
- In knowing our self, we come to know and **understand others**
- We develop greater **emotional intelligence**
- And come to see **commonality** in all people
- Whilst acknowledging and **respecting the uniqueness** and individuality of **all**
- **Including** our self
- Then we are able to **accept others** for who they are, with non-judgment
- And **accept our self** for who we are, with non-judgment
- **Without needing to please others**
- But instead honouring our **authentic** self
- By living from our **heart**
- Our **truth**
- By **'being authentic'**
- And therefore **happy**

The 'Absolute Self'

Roshi (1983) talks of an "absolute self, in which you forget or do not recognise yourself" and an "individual self, which objectifies the world and self"

The 'absolute' self is defined as an aspect of self that transcends the ego self. It is: beyond division, discord and striving; beyond 'becoming' i.e. 'it is', 'I am'; beyond fear and judgment; it is totally benevolent; connected to the whole of life; unified; vital, energetic; smiling, joyful, grateful; wants to serve, help, contribute; is synchronised with the flow of life; it is total, complete, whole; it is at the core of, or one with 'absolute awareness'.

"Many have arrived at an understanding that consciousness is an intrinsic property of matter. The Universe is conscious and we are units of that consciousness. If this is true it follows that one can know everything by looking deeply into oneself - through meditation. How can we explain, using our linear, divisive mind that which is transcendental? How can a part understand the whole? If one detaches oneself from identification with the personality one might see reality..." (Theosophical Society, 2010)

What does it mean to be 'Self-Aware'?

"Self-awareness enables us to stand apart and examine the way we 'see' ourselves – our self-paradigm, the most fundamental paradigm of effectiveness. It affects not only our attitudes and behaviours, but also how we see other people. It becomes our map of the basic nature of [hu]mankind"(Covey, 1989). As we increase self-understanding we are inclined to become more understanding of others.

Covey (1989) also talks of the 'social mirror': the view of one's self that comes from others. He cautions us to be aware that the views of others may be 'their' projections rather than accurate reflections of who we are. A self-reflective practice can provide a balanced view.

Self-awareness involves "a propensity for self-reflection and thoughtfulness. Self-aware people typically find time to reflect quietly, often by themselves, which allows them to think things over rather than react impulsively." (Goleman, 2002)

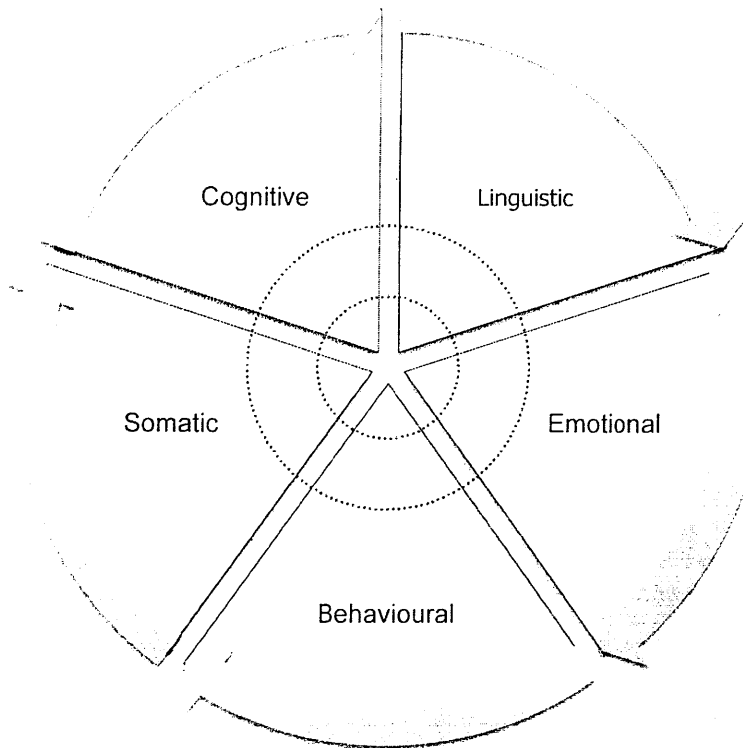
"Self-awareness is the ability to think about your thought processes" (Covey, 1989), it is also known as 'meta-cognition'. "Meta-cognition provides the authentic leader with heightened self-awareness (Chan, Hannah and Gardner, 2005)

According to Goleman (2002) "Self-aware leaders also understand their values, goals and dreams. They know where they're headed and why. They're attuned to what feels right to them." This 'feeling' is literally a physical sensation. He explains, "the emotional brain activates circuitry that runs from the limbic centres into the gut, giving the compelling sense that this feels right." A 'gut' feeling or 'intuition' is therefore both mental and physical.

"When you are fully aware

- You can centre yourself at will
- You are familiar with a place of peace and silence inside
- You aren't divided against yourself by inner conflicts
- You can transcend local disturbances and remain unaffected by them
- You see the world from an expanded perspective
- Your inner world is organised

(Chopra, 2009)



A Model of Self/Awareness

Outer circle: represents the 'ego' self
Inner circle: represents the 'authentic' self
Centre: represents the 'absolute' self

Each of the circles is interconnected and the 'boundaries' diffuse, nothing is fixed or limited. For example, operating from the authentic self may initially be sporadic or limited, but with awareness and over time, may increase to encompass one's entire self and life experience.

An experience of the absolute self is all encompassing and unified, it may involve a feeling of expansion or infinitude. The absolute self underlies all other aspects of the self.

5 Aspects of Self/Awareness:

Cognitive: awareness of what we think and thinking mindfully - developing an awareness of the creative potential of thought >> Using thought to create positive outcomes

Linguistic: speaking mindfully to and about one's self and to and about others. Being aware of the voices of judgment, cynicism and fear (VOJ, VOC, VOF) >> Speaking respectfully

Emotional: awareness of our inner state, responses and reactions – in relation to self, others and external situations >> Embracing all emotions

Behavioural: awareness of the impact of our behaviour on the life experience of our self, others and the environment >> Living with integrity

Somatic: awareness of the physical self, the senses and the body in general, including diet, hydration, exercise, sleep, relaxation and 'non-doing' >> Listening to the body and attending to it's needs respectfully

Levels of Self-Awareness:

The development of mindfulness is an invaluable asset in the process of increasing self-awareness.

Self-awareness may be experienced as functioning at a variety of 'levels' and have a number of outcomes or applications. The following list is not exhaustive but shows a range of applications and the value of developing self-awareness and awareness in general, in both a personal and professional capacity:

1. Wellbeing: being 'fit for purpose'; attending to physical and mental health and wellbeing; making changes to lifestyle that will support this goal
2. Authenticity: becoming more aware of 'who I am' and 'walking the talk'; being true to personal beliefs and values; finding the courage to operate transparently; expressing one's self respectfully and with integrity
3. Creativity: seeing 'causes and consequences'; taking full responsibility for one's self; being aware of all that we create (problems and solutions); making connections that will enable creativity; developing 'psychological flexibility', informed risk-taking, imagination and spontaneity; challenging assumptions and sharpening analytical and interpretive skills; expressing the 'whole' self; developing sensory awareness
4. Intuition: developing a heightened and holistic self-awareness; strengthening self-trust; making decisions based upon insight or intuition; experiencing greater 'flow' and 'synchronicity'; being 'at one' with the flow of life itself

Mindfulness

"Mindfulness is nonconceptual awareness ...'bare attention'. It is not thinking. It does not get involved with thoughts or concepts. It does not get hung up on ideas or opinions or memories. It just looks. Mindfulness registers experiences, but it does not compare them. It does not label or categorise them. It just observes everything as if it was occurring for the first time. It is not analysis that is based on reflection and memory. It is, rather, the direct and immediate experiencing of whatever is happening, without the medium of thought. It comes before thought in the perceptual process" (140)

"Mindfulness is participatory observation. The meditator is both participant and observer at one and the same time. If one watches one's emotions or physical sensations, one is feeling them at that very same moment. Mindfulness is not an intellectual awareness. It is just awareness" (141)

"...seated meditation itself is not the game. It's the practice. The game in which those basic skills are to be applied is the rest of one's experiential existence" (157)

Bhante Henepola Gunaratana, (2002) 'Mindfulness in Plain English', Boston MA: Wisdom Publications.

"While washing the dishes one should only be washing the dishes, which means that while washing the dishes one should be completely aware of the fact that one is washing the dishes." (3)

"Mindfulness frees us of forgetfulness and dispersion...mindfulness enables us to live. You should know how to breathe to maintain mindfulness, as breathing is a natural and extremely effective tool which can prevent dispersion. Breath is the bridge which connects life to consciousness, which unites your body to your thoughts. Whenever your mind becomes scattered, use your breath as the means to take hold of your mind again." (15)

"[When sitting] Keep your back straight. This is very important. The neck and head should be aligned with the spinal column; they should be straight but not stiff or wood-like. Keep your eyes focused a yard or two in front of you. If you can, maintain a half smile...place your left hand, palm side up, in your right palm. Let all the muscles in your hands, fingers, arms, and legs relax. Let go of everything...hold on to nothing but your breath and your half smile." (34/5)

Thich Nhat Hanh, (1975/2008), 'The Miracle of Mindfulness', Rider.

"Walking meditation involves intentionally attending to the experience of walking itself. It involves focusing on the sensations in your feet or your legs or, alternatively, feeling your whole body moving...We begin by making an effort to be fully aware as one foot contacts the ground, as the weight shifts to it, as the other foot lifts and moves ahead and then comes down to make contact with the ground in its turn. To deepen our concentration, we do not look around...but keep our gaze focused in front of us. We also don't look at our feet...It is an internal observation that is being cultivated, just the felt sensations of walking, nothing more...To reinforce this message, we walk in circles around the room or back and forth." (114/5)

Jon Kabat-Zinn, (1990/2008) 'Full Catastrophe Living', London: Piatkus

The key features of mindfulness practice – experienced in relation to self, others and the environment:

Acceptance
Non-judgment
Present-moment awareness
Noticing
Curiosity
Alertness
Concentration
Compassion
Gratitude

Also: developing greater awareness of being on 'autopilot'/unconsciousness behaviour

Tasting Mindfulness

*Have you ever had the experience of stopping so completely,
of being in your body so completely,
of being in your life so completely,
that what you knew and what you didn't know,
that what had been and what was yet to come,
and the way things are right now
no longer held even the slightest hint of anxiety or discord?
It would be a moment of complete presence, beyond striving, beyond mere
acceptance,
beyond the desire to escape or fix anything or plunge ahead,
a moment of pure being, no longer in time,
a moment of pure seeing, pure feeling,
a moment in which life simply is,
and that 'isness' grabs you by all your senses,
all your memories, by your very genes,
by your loves, and
welcomes you home.*

By Jon Kabat-Zinn

Self-Awareness: The 'Bigger Picture'

"To be conscious means to be awake, mindful. To live consciously means to be open to perceiving the world around and within us, to understand our circumstances, and to decide how to respond to them in ways that honour our needs, values, and goals" (Kofman, *Conscious Business* 2006: 3)

"Mindfulness starts with *self-awareness*: knowing yourself enables you to make choices about how you respond to people and situations. Deep knowledge about yourself enables you to be consistent, to present yourself authentically, as you are" (Boyatzis & McKee *Resonant Leadership* 2005: 120)

"...we have to investigate our own experience and our own *thought process* in a clearer, more transparent and rigorous way. In other words, trust your senses, trust your observations, trust your own perception as the fundamental starting point of any investigation – but then *follow that train* of your observation all the way back to its source" (Scharmer, *Theory U* 2009: 31)

"A learning organization is a place where people are continually discovering how they create their reality. And how they can change it" (Senge, *The Fifth Discipline* 1990/2006: 12)

"...people begin to see themselves as part of the issue, they begin to see how they collectively create a pattern that at first seemed to be caused by purely exterior forces" (Scharmer, *Theory U* 2009: 36)

"Being in contact with your higher self is characterised by a deep sense of knowingness and certainty...you know that you are creating your own experience of life" (Gawain, *Creative Visualisation* 1978/2002: 52)

"People with a high level of personal mastery...approach their life as an artist would approach a work of art" (Senge, *The Fifth Discipline* 1990/2006: 7)

"The moment one definitely commits oneself, then providence moves too. All sorts of things occur to help one that would never otherwise have occurred. A whole stream of events issue from the decision, raising in one's favour all manner of unforeseen incidents and meetings and material assistance, which no [one] could have dreamed would have come [their] way. Whatever you can do, or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power and magic in it. Begin it now." (Goethe?)

"When you are not in a hurry and the mind is free from anxiety, it becomes quiet and in the silence something may be heard that is ordinarily too fine and subtle for perception" (cited in Falconer, *Creative Intelligence and Self-Liberation*, 2007: 87)

"The people who come to you are the very people you need in relation to your commitment. Doors open, a sense of flow develops, and you find you are acting in a coherent field of people who may not even be aware of one another. You are not acting individually any longer, but out of the unfolding generative order. This is the unbroken wholeness of the implicate order out of which seemingly discrete events take place. At this point, your life becomes a series of predictable miracles" (Jaworski, *Synchronicity* 1998: 185)

Appendix 9: CD Recording of Mindfulness Practice Distributed to Participants



ENJOY



let yourself go

This year's going to be a good one!

LOOK HOW FAR WE'VE COME...

Family



love



Success!

PIZZA EXPRESS
(www.pizzaexpress.com)
Tasters' score 88/100
Nutritionist's score 68/100
Pizza Express has a branded range of lighter options called 'Lighter' (bottom right), which includes pizzas under 500 calories and no fat. There was only one 'lighter' device however, made of be...



CHANGE

New beginnings

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