



Participants' notes Module 2 Mindfulness and Emotion Management

Families and Carers Training and Support (FACTS)

Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD)
Emerging Unstable Personality Disorder (EUPD)

A short course for family members and friends of people who have BPD

Module 1: Introduction to BPD

Module 2: Mindfulness and Emotion Management

Module 3: Mentalizing

Module 4: Validation

Module 5: Problem Solving

Resources	Module 2: Mindfulness and Emotion Management
	Mindfulness Practice Guide:
Homework:	1. Mindfulness of Emotion -This gives practice in being aware of how you feel in different situations. - Helps raise awareness of the effects of the emotion.
	2. Observing and Describing Emotions This can help you to become more aware of your state of mind and think about how you are feeling and responding.
	3. Wise Mind Worksheet- This explains the different states of mind, and may help you identify what state of mind you were in during a particular situation

Zoom House Rules

- Confidentiality anything said in the group stays in the group
- Respect
- Difficulties of meeting online
- Use the hand icon if you want to speak
- We are learning and welcome your feedback!

Module 2 – Mindfulness and Emotion Management

Mindfulness originated from Buddhism, and describes a skill of having enhanced attention to, and awareness of, a current experience. It requires a person to be open to sensations without judgment or coming to conclusions.

Mindfulness is:

The quality of awareness that comes from

paying attention on purpose

in the present moment

without judgement

John Kabat Zinn

It is important to start **practising mindfulness** with experiences that are not majorly problematic. Once this is achieved, mindfulness, and thus mentalizing, can be tried both during and after an emotionally significant event.

How to practice mindfulness:

Stage 1: Learn to be mindful of **yourself** – i.e. practise being aware of a part of your body or an object.

Stage 2: Apply mindfulness to a **daily experience**, e.g. sitting on a train – how do you feel?

Stage 3: Incorporate the additional factor of '**other**' to the skill – i.e. in your mind, go through your past experiences with others, and use mindfulness techniques, noticing your thoughts about their thoughts, without judgment.

Stage 4: Add the ability of mentalizing in the '**current moment**' to your skill – i.e. practise mentalizing **during** an experience, at the time it is actually happening.

What is happening when you do this? This can be described as the 'self-reflection loop' in a current experience.

Mentalizing and mindfulness of a current experience requires the ability to rapidly shift focus from **full participation** to **stepping back** to allow **observation** and **reflection**, and then returning to **participate** again.

This also allows a person to affect the outcome of the situation, as the use of mindfulness and mentalizing helps them to respond differently.

Acceptance of emotions

Emotions have **important functions**, and are neither right nor wrong. Both humans *and* animals display emotional behaviours, which can be quick, useful and necessary for **survival**. For example, an infant reacts to an adult's smile or a look of fright, which can assist and direct the infant until they learn words; guilt is important to prevent people from doing harm; fear prevents someone from entering a dangerous situation, etc.



Emotions therefore **motivate** behaviour, almost as if the action urge is hardwired to the emotion.

We can also use emotional reactions as **information** about ourselves and our environment. For example, if we have a 'good feeling' about something, it is our emotions telling us this. Emotions are essential for our decision making, actions and therefore vital for **mentalizing**.

However some people can tend to treat emotions as **facts** rather than an **experience**. E.g. 'if I **feel** incompetent, then I **am** incompetent', or 'if I get depressed when I am alone, then I shouldn't be left alone'; 'If I feel you are not nice to me, you are a horrible person'. This is characteristic of people with BPD and can result in family crises, leading to a breakdown in relationships. These experiences can then lead to **emotion avoidance** by the whole family, which in turn reinforces the idea that emotions are dangerous, preventing the learning of important skills for more constructive relationships.

The aim for you is to first manage your emotions; otherwise you will not be able to help someone with BPD manage theirs.

How can we be aware of our emotions?



Being alert to early warning signs is done through **mentalizing** and being **mindful**.

Practising awareness of emotions can significantly help interactions with someone with BPD. Take a few minutes each day to reflect upon your feelings and label the emotion(s). The first steps for doing this are **identification** and **acceptance**.

There are some common emotions that are important to recognise. Note that each feeling is often accompanied by characteristic thoughts.



Anger: Is a response to real or imagined danger, causing a rush of adrenaline and increased blood flow to muscles. The body can become tense as it gets ready to fight or run ('fight/flight'). We may start to blame someone for our feelings or we may think about something that has happened to make us feel that way.

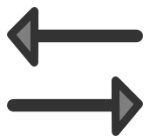
Fear: Can create stressful feelings in the body, in a similar way to anger, but our minds tend to react with dread and anxiety, and it's hard to think of a solution other than retreating.

Sadness: Often occurs in response to a loss of something valued. It may be felt as a lump in the throat, heaviness, or a sense of emptiness. Many people cry when they're sad and thoughts tend to be negative and pessimistic, focusing on particular past sad events.



Happiness: Likely to occur during pleasurable and meaningful activities or when remembering a positive experience. It may be experienced as contentment or fulfilment. We may be energetic or confident, with positive and optimistic thoughts.

Techniques to help manage extreme emotions



Opposite action: Opposite action is doing or saying something that is the **opposite** of the emotion itself. This technique can be used **by people with BPD** in order to manage their own emotions, and by **family members/carers** in their interactions with their loved ones, to de-escalate an emotionally driven situation.

This technique helps to calm a situation down. It is **not** suppressing emotions and doesn't ignore the feeling.

Examples:

- **Anger** can be moderated by doing something **nice** for the person who made you angry or by expressing **friendliness**. It could also involve avoiding the person you are angry with (walking away from a situation to avoid a row, for example) or doing something nice for yourself.
- **Fear** can be challenged by **approaching** the situation or person that is feared, rather than avoiding it/them.
- **Depression** accompanied by lethargy can be challenged by getting **active** and doing things that make you feel more confident or capable.



Behaviours influence emotions and vice versa, so using **opposite action** (i.e. changing behaviours) when we have problematic emotions results in a steady change in emotions more consistent with our new behaviour.

There are times when opposite action isn't appropriate, such as when feelings alert you to a situation that needs immediate action, and when your '**gut feeling**' informs you, such as not walking down a dark alleyway etc.

Mindfulness in terms of emotions

There are three aspects to mindfulness: **emotional** mind, **rational** mind and **wise** mind.

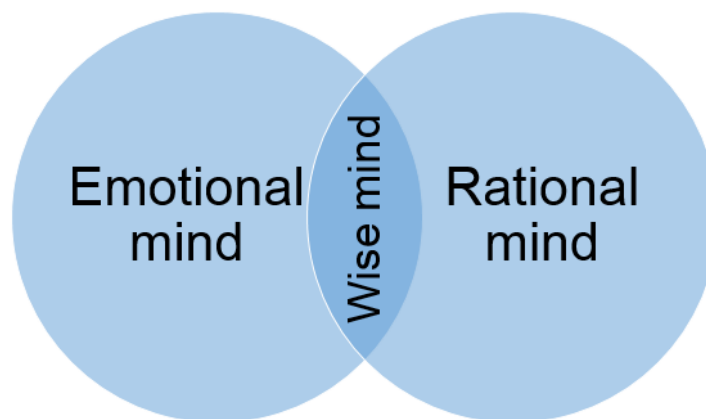
Emotional Mind: A person is in Emotional Mind when their thoughts and behaviour are primarily controlled by their **current emotional state**. It is difficult to think clearly, feelings become facts, and facts can be distorted to fit in with their current mood. It can be beneficial, e.g. as a motivation for relationships or when pursuing a hard task, and people high in Emotional Mind are often passionate about people, beliefs, causes, etc. However, problems occur when the experience creates a painful state. Emotional Mind can occur with both pleasant and unpleasant emotions, and may result in the person rejecting and dismissing solutions, preventing the ability to **mentalize**. Often, people with **BPD** are stuck in Emotional Mind.





Rational Mind: A person is in Rational Mind when being intellectual, thinking **logically**, and attending to facts. The person is often distant from their emotions. This can be beneficial, e.g. in problem solving or following instructions, but it can also ignore helpful information from emotions and doesn't account for subjective experiences or what the situation feels like for another person.

Wise Mind: In this state, both Emotional Mind and Rational Mind work together and are given equal value in decision making. Thoughts and feelings match. Wise Mind is similar to **intuition** and it is where **mentalizing** takes place. A series of exercises, such as breathing and being mindful (which will be discussed in Module 3), can help a person access this state, as Wise Mind is about responding from a centre of **calmness**. It is important that people with BPD learn to access their Wise Mind.



Mindfulness Apps.

Try 'Headspace' or look on the App store on your phone or tablet for other apps.

Mindfulness Practice Guide

Observe:

- Notice the experience without reacting
- Let experiences, feelings and thoughts come into your mind and flow out again
- Control your attention, but cling to nothing and push nothing away
- Be alert to every thought, feeling and action that comes into your mind
- Watch your thoughts come and go
- Notice what comes through your senses

Describe:

- Put your experience into words

Participate:

- Let yourself get involved in the moment and let go of ruminating

Non-judgmentally:

- Don't evaluate, just focus on the facts, not the good or bad, should or should not.
- Accept each moment
- Acknowledge the helpful and harmful but don't judge
- If you do find yourself judging, don't judge the judging!
- Do things one at a time and do each thing with all of your attention
- Let go of distractions and go back to what you are doing again, and again, and again
- Focus on what works, acting as skilfully as you can and keep an eye on your objectives
- Let go of anger

Resources:

- **2 Minutes:** http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w1EZ_hpnhDM
- **5 Minutes:** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dEzbdLn2bJc>
- **10 Minutes:** http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pv6Ot_Kr7D8
- **15 Minutes:** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tKUUPkR7c8>
- **Mindfulness on BBC Breakfast:** http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sMsUGB_KV7s
- Jon Kabot Zinn: <https://www.mindfulnesscds.com/>
- YouTube videos of Marsha Linehan and Opposite Action
- 'Opposite Action' in Valerie Porr's book 'Overcoming Borderline Personality Disorder'

- **Mind website:**
<http://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/mindfulness/>
- **NHS Choices. Mindfulness for mental well-being.**
<http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/Pages/mindfulness.aspx>

Practice activity

Mindfulness of Emotions

Being **mindful of emotions** can help in stepping back from the emotion, understanding it, and reducing associated fear and distress.

Take **a few minutes to be quiet** in a place where you won't be disturbed. Bring your attention to your breath. Notice how it feels as you breathe in and out slowly.

Notice any feelings that come up.

Name the emotion. What word best describes what you are feeling?

(**MBT** divides emotions into basic and social emotions. **Basic:** Interest and curiosity; fear; anger; sexual desire; love and caring; separation anxiety and sadness; play and joy. **Social:** Shame and guilt; envy; jealousy; pride; embarrassment; loyalty; achievement. Social emotions are basically those feelings that require you to have an ability to think about what others might think about you. So, for example, I feel ashamed when I think of someone watching me do something wrong.)

Accept the emotion. It's a bodily reaction. You can try to understand how it came about – what were the contributing circumstances? Don't judge it, resist it, struggle, or encourage it.

Investigate the emotion.

How intensely do you feel it on a scale of 1–5 (1= No intensity; 5 = Most Intense)? _____

What are you feeling in your body? Where do you feel it?

What is your posture like when feeling this emotion?

Where do you feel muscle tension?

What is your facial expression and what does your face feel like?

What thoughts or judgements do you notice?

Just notice the thoughts. Let them come into your mind, and let them pass. If you find you're judging them or yourself, struggling with them, or if other emotions arise, just notice this, and bring your attention back to your breathing. With practice you can use this technique with more intense emotions.

Practice activity

Observing and Describing Emotions

Select a current or recent emotional reaction and fill out as much of this sheet as you can.

Emotion names: Which of these best describes your emotion?

Basic: Interest and curiosity; fear; anger; sexual desire; love and caring; separation anxiety and sadness; and play and joy. **Social:** Shame and guilt; envy; jealousy; pride; embarrassment; loyalty; achievement.

Intensity (0–100) (100 is highest)

Promoting event for my emotion (who, what, when, where). What started the emotion/ what happened?

Interpretations (beliefs, assumptions, appraisals) of the situation:

Body changes and sensations: What am/was I feeling in my body?

Body language: What is/was my facial expression? Posture? Gestures?

Action urges: What do/did I feel like doing? What do/did I want to say?

What I said or did in the situation:

What after-effect does/did the emotion have on me (my state of mind, other emotions, behaviour, thoughts, memory, body etc)?

Practice activity

Wise Mind Worksheet

'Wise Mind' is the state where 'Emotional Mind' and 'Rational Mind' merge together. It helps make sense of thoughts and feelings, giving a more balanced and wise response. It is the wise inner part that just 'knows' what is true.

Think about a situation or event that has happened in your life and try to make a note of your different states of mind. Use the boxes below to help you.

<p>Emotional Thoughts Driven by opinions and interpretations. What went through your mind? What was disturbing? What makes you feel this way? What are you reacting to? What's the worst thing? What's the worst thing that could happen? What do you want to do/to happen? What do you feel?</p>	<p>Rational Thoughts Based on facts. What do you think you should do? What advice would you give to a friend? What would a friend say to you? Is it as important as it appears? What evidence is there about what's likely to happen? What are the facts?</p>
<p>Wise Mind Take a breath. What does Wise Mind make of your situation? What is the bigger picture? Will there be any consequences of your reactions and, if so, what will they be? What is the best response to this situation for you, others, and the situation? What will be helpful and effective? Ask yourself how important this issue is when you take into account wider issues – does it matter?</p>	