

## Therapies

Acupuncture | Art Therapy | Counselling | Healing Imagery | Massage | **Meditation and Mindfulness** | Music Therapy | Nordic Walking | Physical Activity | Qigong | Reflexology | Relaxation | Shiatsu | Yoga



## Meditation and mindfulness

By focusing your attention, meditation practices aim to help you create a peaceful, quiet state of mind. Mindfulness involves increasing your awareness of what is happening in the present moment. This can help you learn to respond more effectively to the challenges of your stress, pain and illness. For people with cancer, meditation and mindfulness are offered to improve your wellbeing and to help cope with the symptoms of cancer and its treatments.

People who have tried meditation and mindfulness report that it helps them to feel calmer and more able to cope. Studies show that meditation and mindfulness are potentially beneficial for reducing anxiety, stress and chemotherapy-related nausea.

### Information on meditation and mindfulness

This evidence-based information sheet aims to provide clearly sourced and reliable information to help you make informed choices about meditation and mindfulness, one of a range of complementary therapies available to support people with cancer. If you would like more information on how to access the range of services Penny Brohn UK provides, please contact our Helpline on 0303 3000 118. We are able to provide our services free of charge, thanks to the charitable donations and voluntary contributions which fund our work.

### What do people who have tried meditation and mindfulness say about it?

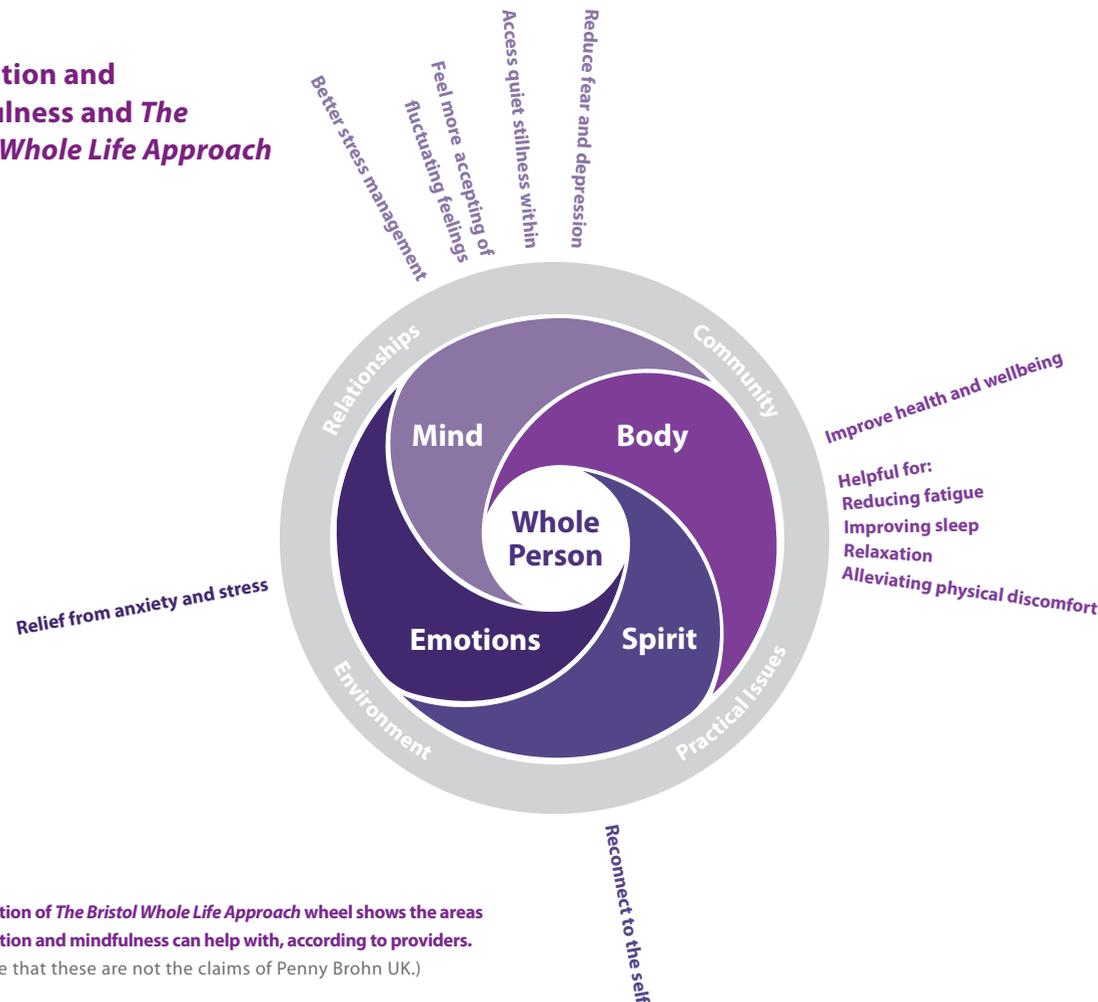
Research studies known as qualitative studies ask people about their experiences. They can provide information from a personal perspective, but can't tell us if a therapy is likely to work for everyone.

Cancer patients have reported many benefits, including changed perception of their illness, an increased ability to cope, and a greater sense of control. People also said they felt calmer, more able to deal with their pain and experienced a sense of personal growth and acceptance.

## Meditation and mindfulness and *The Bristol Whole Life Approach*

**This adaptation of *The Bristol Whole Life Approach* wheel shows the areas that meditation and mindfulness can help with, according to providers.**

(Please note that these are not the claims of Penny Brohn UK.)



### What happens in a meditation and mindfulness session?

- Sessions are of different length and can be in groups or one-to-ones. There is usually an introduction, then silence for practice.
- For those who wish to take the practices further, there are centres for longer sessions and retreats. You can also meditate alone, at home or in daily situations.
- Practice can include sitting, lying down and even some movement.
- Mindfulness meditation is often taught as an 8 week course in 2-2½ hour group sessions. Each week has a

theme, linking to daily life. Sessions include mindful body scan, movement and sitting practices and discussions between the group and teacher. Courses encourage daily 45 minute home practice and informal practices.

### More about meditation and mindfulness

Meditation aims to create inner peace and calm. It can be a spiritual or health practice. Meditation involves bringing the mind back to a particular focus, such as breathing or an object.

As a spiritual practice, meditation may be used to gain understanding for self-development and ultimately, to link with the 'divine' in a state of heightened consciousness. Spiritual meditation has been practised around the world for thousands of years and is used in a number of different religions. As a health practice, the West has taken an interest in meditation for its potential to maintain health and to help healing. Popular and scientific interest in the 1960s and 1970s looked at how meditation could help relieve stress, reduce anxiety, lower blood pressure and generally improve health.

Mindfulness is a related practice with its roots in Buddhist meditation. It involves keeping the attention on internal (body sensation, thoughts and feelings) and external experiences (your surrounding world). Mindfulness aims to help you live more fully in the present moment, increasing your ability to respond to situations rather than react. Mindfulness does not aim for a particular result, rather it is about simply learning to 'be' in the present moment with your experience. This can help reduce the overall distress of challenging experiences and life events.

### Are meditation and mindfulness safe?

Meditation and mindfulness are generally considered safe. People who suffer with mental health conditions should consult their doctor beforehand. A small number of reports suggest that meditation could make these conditions worse.

### Practitioner perspective

*"Meditation can help you to access quiet stillness within, feel more settled and accepting of your fluctuating feelings."*

*Penny Brohn UK believes that meditation is a powerful aspect of emotional, mental, physical and spiritual healing. We teach simple and effective techniques that people can integrate into their lives."*

### Are there any legal issues?

Practitioners do not need a licence to teach meditation in the UK. Some traditions or schools of meditation have training or accreditation schemes.

### What is the evidence on meditation and mindfulness?

Reviews of the research into meditation and Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction have found that they can have positive effects. The reviews found some evidence to suggest it may reduce anxiety, stress and chemotherapy-related nausea. They may help people cope and improve mood. There were mixed results for its impact on depression and quality of life.

A full list of references and an extended summary of the research literature is available upon request from our Helpline.

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### Contact us

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### Statement

Our information and research is designed to help you make informed choices about the services that we provide. From time to time, for illustrative purposes, we may make reference to commonly available products (such as relaxation CDs and popular self-help books). We do not endorse or advertise the use of any specific product.

### Disclaimer:

While we make every effort to use up-to-date and reliable sources, we cannot accept liability for errors in the sources that we use and also cannot guarantee to find all the information relevant to your enquiry or request. All responsibility for interpretation of and action upon that information rests with you. This information and advice is offered on the understanding that if you intend to support your treatment with complementary or alternative approaches, then it is advisable to consult your medical team to ensure that they have a complete understanding of your situation and the complementary or alternative approach that you are considering.

### Organisations that offer support and information for people with cancer

**Cancer Research UK**      Tel: 0808 800 4040  
[www.cancerresearchuk.org](http://www.cancerresearchuk.org)

**Macmillan Cancer Support**      Tel: 0808 808 0000  
[www.macmillan.org.uk](http://www.macmillan.org.uk)

**NHS 111**      Tel: 111  
[www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

### More information on complementary therapies

**NHS Evidence CAM Cancer**      [www.evidence.nhs.uk](http://www.evidence.nhs.uk)  
[www.cam-cancer.org/CAM-Summaries](http://www.cam-cancer.org/CAM-Summaries)