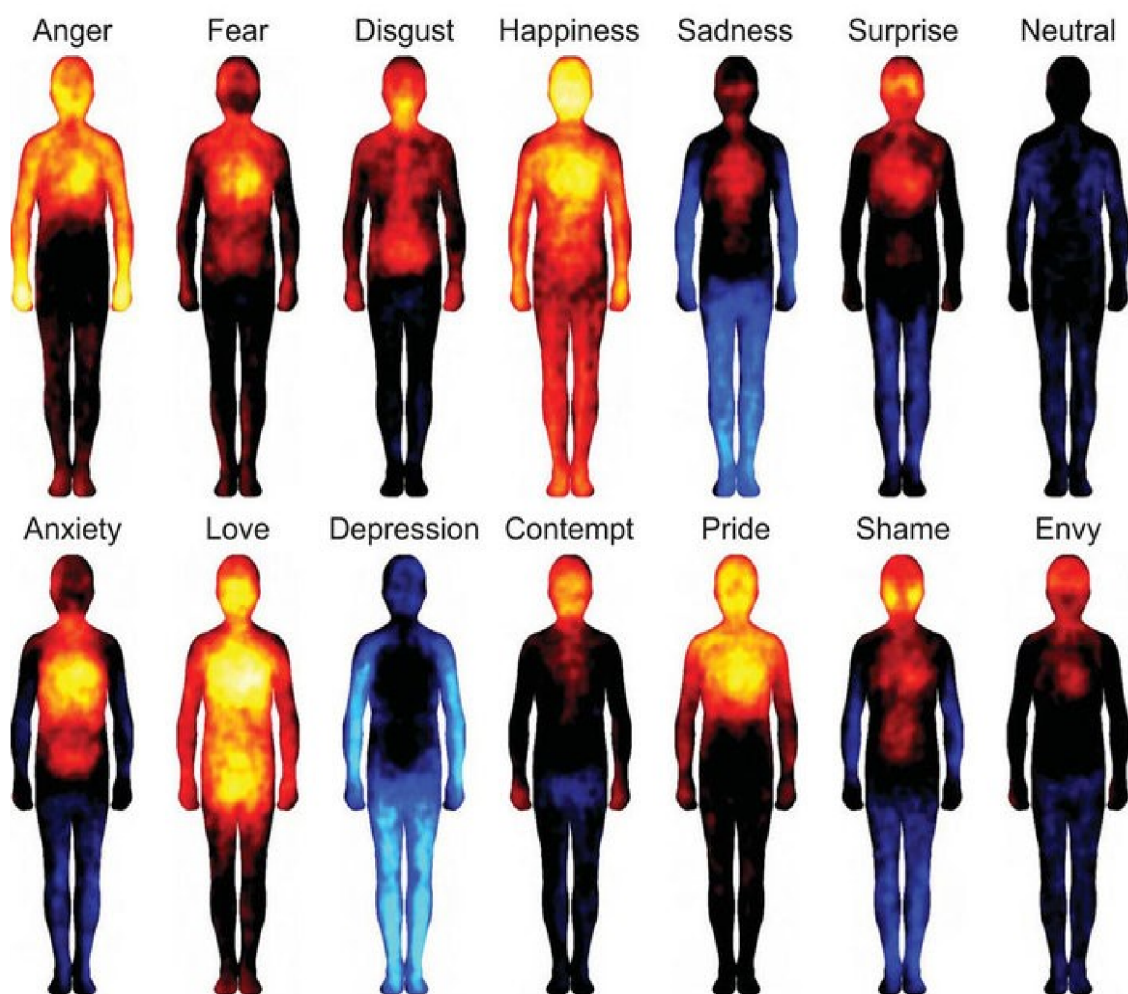




Emotional Skills Course



Group Agreement

- Phones on silent.
- We ask that you have your video cameras on if possible and mics on mute when not speaking.
- We will do our best to come to everyone during discussions, but we do have to be mindful of time.
- Please can we ask that you be mindful of what you say so we can keep everyone safe. So, we ask, for example, not to talk about past traumas, abuse and self harm, drugs etc.
- Free from distractions.
- If anyone is struggling or feels uncomfortable with the topic of conversation, please take a few minutes away from the group. You can also use the numbers on the following page.
- Confidentiality. Please ensure that your space is confidential and you do not have others in the room with you. This means you can feel safe in the sharing of knowledge. It is important not to disclose any information that you do not feel comfortable sharing with the group.
- All discussions are kept confidential and are not discussed outside of the group setting.



Useful helplines

Mindline (24/7): 01823 276892

Shout (24/7): Text SHOUT to 85258

Samaritans (24/7): 116 123

Life threatening/emergency situations (24/7): 999

Urgent medical help and advice but not a life-threatening situation (24/7): 111

Local Crisis Spaces in Somerset to get out of hours support:

Taunton (Mind in Somerset): Monday – Sunday: 6PM – 11:00PM Saturday and Sunday 12-4PM

Sussex Lodge, 44 Station Rd, Taunton Somerset TA1 1NS

Yeovil (Mind in Somerset): Monday – Sunday: 6PM – 11:00PM Saturday and Sunday 12-4PM

Yeovil Foyer, Peter St, Yeovil BA20 1PN

Bridgwater (Second Step): Friday – Monday: 6PM – 11:00PM

Town hall, High St, Bridgwater, TA6 3BL

Mendip (Second Step): Sunday – Monday 6PM- 11PM

Please phone **01823 276 892** before so they know that you are coming, and note that they cannot take anyone under eighteen or under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Due to health and safety procedures they cannot guarantee there is an accessible toilet facility on site.

Further information: <https://www.mindinsomerset.org.uk/get-support/crisis-space/>





Emotional Skills Course—Session 1

The Limbic System
Goals Of Mindfulness Practice
Mindful Breathing
Mindful Observing

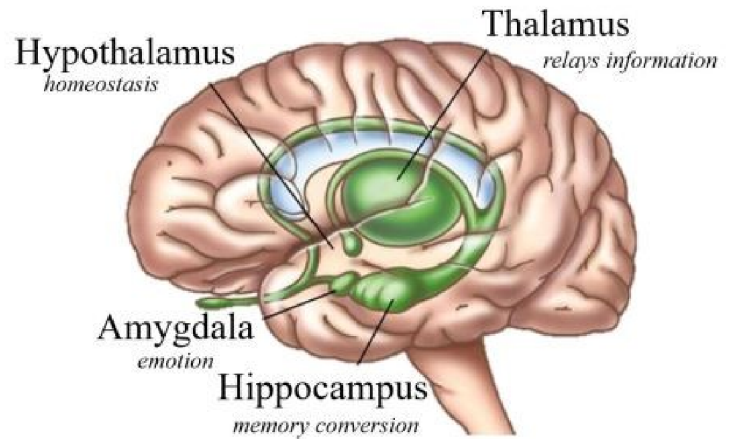
Skills Practice for the week:
Mindful Breathing Daily Practice
Mindful Observing Daily Practice

Our brains are the products of millions of years of evolution

Different parts of our brain work together to create our perceptions and feelings.

Our mental and emotional characteristics exist because they were useful or even essential in helping our ancestors to survive.

The Limbic System



Our brilliant brains have helped humans to become the most successful creatures on the planet, but they also make us vulnerable to difficulties with our emotions and thoughts.

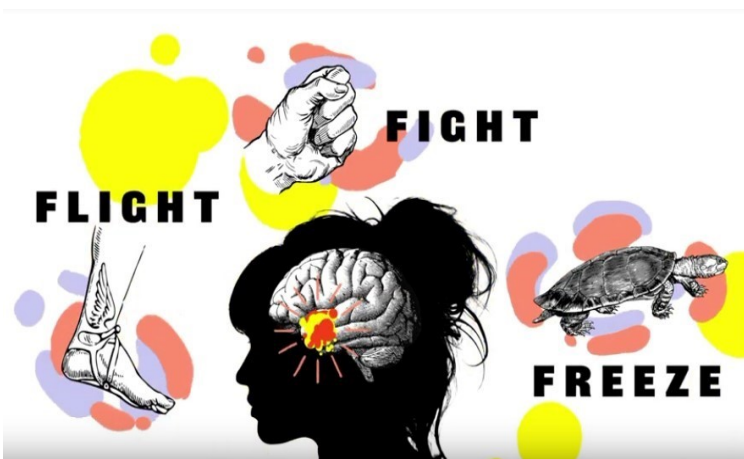
In the limbic brain there is the amygdala, which registers memories of pleasant or frightening experiences and is closely linked to emotions.

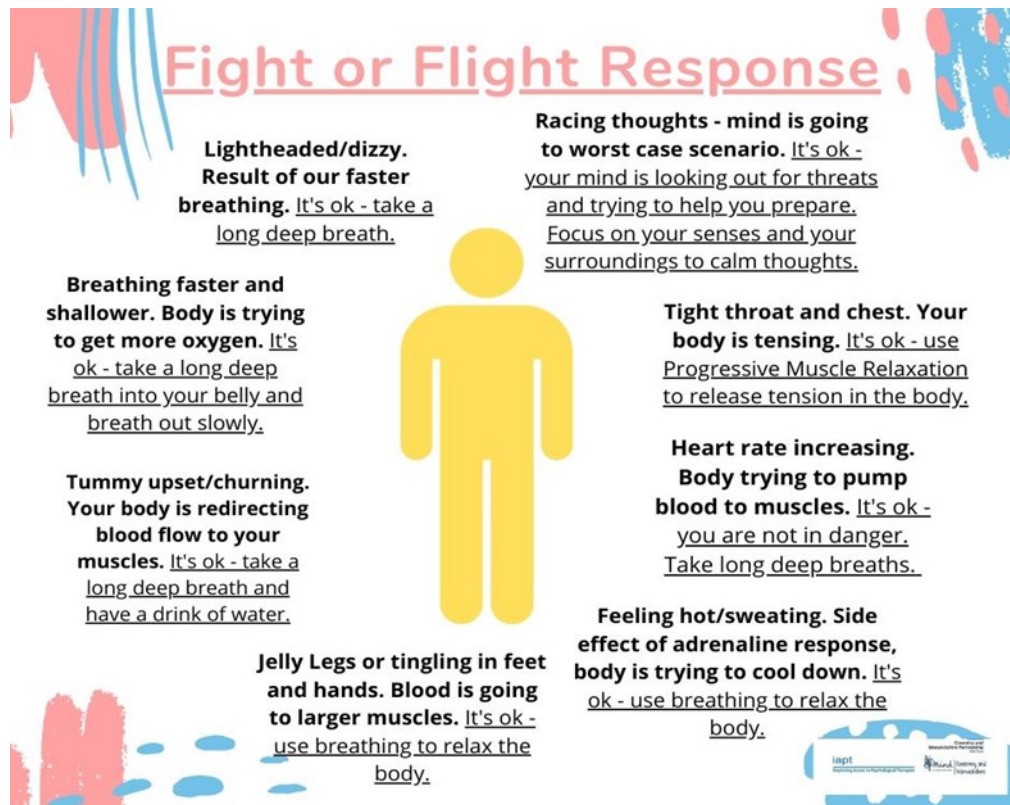
The hypothalamus plays a role in triggering the sympathetic nervous system which is a part of any emotional reaction. The key features of this are the “survival” traits: e.g.: looking for signs of danger (through sounds, vision or smell); freezing, fleeing or fighting when sensing danger; being hyper focused and seeking safety.

Thousands of years ago we faced daily threats to our survival: tigers and other predators, cold, hunger, warring tribes.

In today’s world, most triggers for anxiety are more subtle: conflict with people, taking exams, career uncertainty, financial stressors.

Our bodies don’t know the difference: our physiological and psychological responses are the same today as they were thousands of years ago.





What we learn in our childhoods, with their unique experiences and caregivers, can cause us problems as adults.

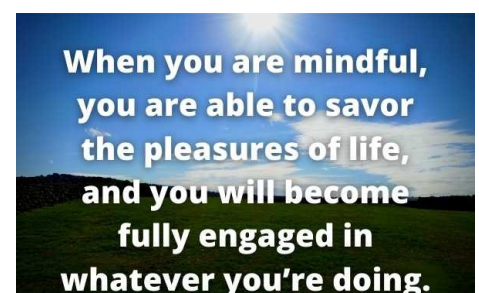
Harsh childhood conditions that are threatening, involve extreme stress, neglect, or poor responses from caregivers, shape our brains in ways that can make our limbic systems more reactive, leading to problems regulating our emotions.

Through repetition and practice we can change our brain's stress responses as adults. Evidence based practices include:

Mindfulness practice has been shown to reduce the reactivity and dominance of the amygdala.

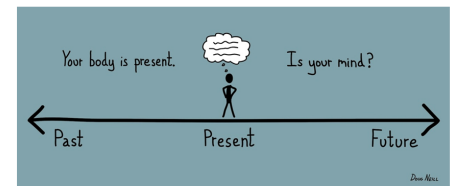
Tai chi decreases anxiety and depression and improves cognition. There is growing evidence that Yoga has similar benefits. Tai Chi may also help us manage symptoms of some chronic diseases, such as fibromyalgia and COPD.

Paying mindful attention to the breath calms the amygdala and the sympathetic nervous system. 3



Goals of Core Mindfulness skills

- Reduce suffering and increase happiness
- Increase control of your mind - taking hold of your mind
- Experience reality as it is



Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way; on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgmentally.

Mindfulness is a practice, do one thing at a time and bring your mind back when it wanders.

The most basic way to do mindful breathing is to focus your attention on your breath, the inhale and exhale. You can do this while standing, but ideally you'll be sitting or even lying in a comfortable position. Your eyes may be open or closed, or you can maintain a soft gaze, with your eyes partly closed but not focusing on anything in particular. It can help to set aside a time for this exercise, but it can also help to practice it when you're feeling particularly stressed or anxious. Experts believe a regular practice of mindful breathing can make it easier to do in difficult situations.

Sometimes, especially when trying to calm yourself in a stressful moment, it might help to start by taking a deep inhale through your nostrils (3 seconds), hold your breath (2 seconds), and a long exhale through your mouth (4 seconds). Otherwise, observe each breath without trying to adjust it; it may help to focus on the rise and fall of your chest or the sensation through your nostrils. As you do so, you may find that your mind wanders, distracted by thoughts or bodily sensations. That's OK. You can notice that this is happening and try to gently bring your attention back to your breath.

https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/mindful_breathing

Another way to practice mindfulness is to observe: paying attention to your sensations as you complete a task. When you notice your mind wandering, gently bring it back to the task.

You can do this with anything which allows you to focus—distracting activities such as watching TV or scrolling through the internet are difficult to do mindfully because, by their very nature, they pull your attention away. Household chores, eating, making a drink, colouring, walking, showering, brushing your teeth and listening to music can all be done in a way where you focus on the sensations in your body and bring your mind to attend to the activity you are doing.

Our minds naturally move to the past, thinking about things that have happened, or move to the future as we plan what we will do. We also regularly make judgements: whether we are doing things right, worrying about what other people think or if something negative will happen. When your mind does this, notice: 'I'm having a judgemental thought' or 'my mind has wandered', and gently return your attention to the thing you are observing.

Module 1 Skills Practice							
Skills Plan	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Mindfulness Activity 1							
How did it go?							
Mindfulness Activity 2							
How did it go?							