

# Mindfulness for Coaches

## THE EIGHT WEEK PROGRAMME

### An Essential Programme for Executive Coaches

In the field of psychotherapy mindfulness training is increasingly being seen as advanced therapeutic training. Research suggests that therapists who have trained in mindfulness as a part of their psychotherapy training have better client outcomes than those who don't (Grepmaier et al, 2007). Research also suggests that rather than a therapist's preferred process or methodology, the biggest variance in client outcomes results from their *way of being* with clients (Norcross and Wampold, 2011). For this reason many therapists are engaging in regular mindfulness practice to actively cultivate factors beneficial to the therapeutic relationship.

From a coaching perspective *Mindfulness for Coaches* offers a means to **deepen the coaching relationship** by impacting how you are – with yourself and others. It's about how you can more deeply attune to yourself and to your clients, and how you can create **transformational resonance**.

By establishing and deepening your own mindfulness practice you will actively cultivate:

- Coach presence and your capacity to offer **generative attention**
- Deeper **embodiment** of unconditional regard and psychological safety
- Greater **sensitivity** to somatic felt sense and intuition
- Deeper levels of **listening** and a capacity to notice more, including micro-expressions
- Deeper levels of **empathy, attunement and resonance**
- The capacity to **stay open** to and hold strong emotions
- Greater **awareness** of transference and countertransference and a means to better self-regulate in the moment

Many therapists are also engaging in regular mindfulness practice simply as a source of **self-care in the face of emotionally demanding work**. Compassion fatigue and the secondary stress experienced as a result of continually dealing with traumatised clients is well documented. Therapists who are the most empathic tend to be most at risk. While coaches are typically not working with clients who have experienced abuse, trauma or who have personality disorders, research suggests that secondary stress can be just as real for coaches (Schermyly, 2014).

Christopher Germer, a clinical psychologist affiliated with Harvard, suggests that the antidote to compassion fatigue is self-compassion (Germer, 2009). Research suggests that self-compassion is an emergent quality that arises from mindfulness training. In studies of therapists who participated in Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) programmes, significant increases in self-compassion were found after training in addition to decreases in stress and burnout (Shapiro et al, 2007). Since *Mindfulness for Coaches* draws on core aspects of MBSR, coaches come away with practical tools to manage their own stress levels and much more besides. Research suggests that there's a clear inverse relationship between stress and compassion (Darley & Batson, 1973) - when we're stressed we become less emotionally available to others. Research also suggests that MBSR training has significant effects on levels of compassion towards others (Condon, 2009).

People who have been trained in mindfulness and self-compassion are less likely to experience compassion fatigue because they have learned the skills to avoid getting overly stressed or burned out. Rather than becoming drained by helping others, mindfulness practice puts us in an optimal mental and emotional state to help others in a *sustainable way*. In addition, by becoming more understanding and accepting towards ourselves, we become more understanding and accepting towards others.

All of this matters in terms of client outcomes. A therapist's own mental health has a significant bearing on outcomes (Beutler, 1986). Therapists who lack self-compassion and are critical and controlling toward themselves are also more critical and controlling toward their clients and have poorer outcomes (Henry et al, 1990). Unconditional positive regard from the coach is central to clients opening to their experience – it's key to transformational change. When we are better able to see and accept the different aspects of ourselves through regular mindfulness practice, we are better placed to bring that same unconditional presence to another.