

Welcome to St. Joseph's Mindfulness Based Relapse Prevention Group (MBRP). In order to prepare you for group we ask that you carefully read this document in its entirety. Please ask your facilitator if you have questions. Thank you!

Substance Use:

It is our policy that all participants are free of substance misuse when coming to sessions. Alcohol, for example, can make you feel anxious, irritable or depressed. It can also affect judgment and concentration and that makes it difficult to be aware of what is happening in the present moment. In addition, alcohol impacts one's ability to think clearly, making it challenging to take in what the program has to offer. The same is true of many other substances. As we do this work of increasing our awareness and attention, we are trying to be clear about what happens in experience and this is difficult to do with substances on board. The use of substances can also be a coping strategy to avoid unpleasant experience and we are trying to turn toward all experiences; the pleasant and the unwanted.

Cell Phones:

Phones are either off or on silent mode and are put away out of sight before group begins. Messages can be checked during break time (in the middle of group). If there is an emergency, please discuss it with the facilitator prior to group.

Smoking:

St Joseph's Health Centre is a smoke free facility and this includes the entire grounds of the hospital property. This include nicotine and marijuana.

Attendance:

It is a requirement of MBRP that you attend the first of the 10 sessions and not miss more than 2 groups in total. If you are unable to attend a session, please inform one of the facilitators as soon as possible.

Arrival & Timing:

Due to the nature of this program, we ask that you arrive at group approx. 15 min prior to group starting, so that you may be registered, settled into your seat and ready to adopt a mindful state the moment group starts. Group will always start on time. If you happen to arrive late, please enter as quietly as possible and quickly take a comfortable seat while not disturbing the meditation or discussion.

Privacy & Safety:

St Joseph's has zero tolerance of misconduct which could result in fear of safety. Physical and verbal forms of aggression cannot be tolerated (examples: slamming doors or items, swearing, raising voice, etc.)

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All members' safety and confidentiality will be protected at all times. What is seen and heard in group, stays in group. Group participants will not speak of whom they have seen at group with non-group members. Participants may be uncomfortable with others knowing that they are attending this group. Together we foster an environment of safety, nonjudgement and growth.

#### The vibe:

Get along with others. Be polite. Respect differences. Promote safety. Be aware that certain language or dialogue about substance use may trigger others.

#### Home Practice:

Home practice is an important element of the program. Together, we will be working to change patterns of mind that often have been around for a long time. These patterns may have become a habit. We can only expect to succeed in making changes if we put time and effort into learning skills. This approach depends entirely on your willingness to do home practice between classes. This home practice will take approximately an hour a day, six days a week, for ten weeks, and involves such tasks as meditating and performing brief exercises. We appreciate that it is often very difficult to carve out that amount of time for something new.

#### Participation & Personal Offerings:

During each session there will be many opportunities to discuss what arises in the practices (both in-session and home practice). In general, we encourage everyone to focus their comments on present-moment experiences noticed throughout the practices. We also want to avoid reassuring or giving advice to other participants so that everyone is allowed to have and share their experience just as it is.

#### Patience & Persistence:

Because we will be working to change well-established habits of mind, you will be putting in a lot of time and effort. The effects may only become apparent later. In many ways, it is much like gardening—we have to prepare the ground, plant the seeds, ensure that they are adequately watered and nourished, and then wait patiently for results.

You may be familiar with this pattern from your previous treatments. Often there is little beneficial effect until you have been taking the medication for some time. Yet improvement in your condition depended on your continuing to take the medication even when you felt no immediate benefit.

In the same way, we ask you to approach the classes and home practice with a spirit of patience and persistence, committing yourself to put time and effort into what will be asked of you, while accepting, with patience, that the fruits of your efforts may not show immediately.

Additionally, you might find that taking the MBRP course is challenging for a number of reasons. We want to assure you that should these challenges arise your instructor will be able to discuss any potential issues with you. In fact, the feedback that past participants wanted us to convey to those who are just getting started is that it is worth hanging in there, even if it is a struggle. The knowledge and understanding you gain will have an impact on reducing your risk of recurrent depression and anxiety.

Struggles & Challenges:

The classes and the assignments can teach you how to be more fully aware and present in each moment of life. The good news is that this makes life more interesting, vivid, and fulfilling. On the other hand, this means facing what is present, even when it is unpleasant and difficult. In practice, you will find that turning to face and acknowledge difficulties, rather than avoiding them, can be the most effective way to reduce unhappiness. It is also central to preventing further substance use issues. Seeing unpleasant feelings, thoughts, or experiences clearly, as they arise, means that you will be in much better shape to “nip them in the bud,” before they progress to more intense or persistence depressions or anxious states.

In the group, you will learn gentle ways to face difficulties, and will be supported by the instructors and the other class members. It is important to know that for some people turning towards difficulty can result in a worsening of symptoms that can become overwhelming. If you are struggling with any aspect of the group, please talk to one of the facilitators before group, on break or after group

Supports:

Participants should have a family physician and/or other community supports while taking this program. Please note that this workshop is not a substitute for individual therapy and we cannot assume responsibility for your care on an ongoing basis. If you need to speak to the facilitators in between sessions you can call us and leave a message; however, we may not be able to get back to you immediately so having other community support is encouraged.

What to bring:

Please always have a pen and your notebook with you. Bring a blanket if you wish

Food + beverages:

These are permitted but please clean up after yourself and be mindful of noise

Break:

10-minute break will be roughly in the middle of group

Facilitator Contact:

Robyn Alexander      416 530 6000 ext. 3929 [robyn.alexander@unityhealth.to](mailto:robyn.alexander@unityhealth.to)

I, \_\_\_\_\_ agree to, and understand, the information provided for the purpose of enrollment in the Mindfulness-Based Relapse Prevention Program.

Dated: \_\_\_\_\_ Signed: \_\_\_\_\_