

# **Bella's Way**

**A Free Book of Poems and Mindful Thoughts in Aid of  
Epilepsy Charities - Please make a Donation!**



**Begin**

**Colin Eveleigh**

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***Please make a Donation!***

**Colin Eveleigh**

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Photographer front cover unknown. Photographs of Bella at her Graduation Show and on the rear cover by the author. All other photographs ~ travelling only as far as his family garden ~ copyright the author.

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***See!***

Soft sky spray settling on hood  
Senses muffled but warm  
In Bella's Wood

No sound here just cool clean air  
Drifting slowly to clear  
Our rarest care

See! she comes towards us now  
Smiling brightly her face  
Turning the sun

## Introduction

Suddenly and unexpectedly, one bright Saturday morning in September 2004 my daughter Annabel died. Nothing could have prepared us for the shock of that awful day and the desperate days to follow. We've been on a very emotional journey since then, and I have written poems to mark some of the distance travelled so far. She had epilepsy, and that was a contributing factor leading to her death, but this book is not about the experience of epilepsy so much as the experience of loss.

In **Part 1** of the book, my poems are an outpouring of fresh, raw and sometimes harrowing grief.

In **Parts 2 - 5** there is a sense of calm, where I try to share some of what I know about Mindfulness, which is the practice I've been learning to help me to cope with my loss.

I'm writing Bella's Way for several reasons - to honour my daughter's life, to inspire others to learn more about Mindfulness, and also importantly to **encourage readers of the book to make donations to epilepsy charities.**

I'm a psychologist by profession, and on many occasions, I have shared in and worked with other people's life-events, traumas, tragedies and catastrophes.

I don't pretend to be an expert in bereavement or grief or mourning, and you won't learn much about any of these theories from this book. However I am living through this experience of the loss of my daughter in real-life, first-hand, so I suppose you will at least get a glimpse of the effect it's having on me. Of course others may well react and adjust to this kind of tragedy in ways very differently to me.

What I really have to say is mostly in the poems. And then there is Mindfulness - I do want to say something about Mindfulness, how it's helping me to cope, and come to terms with my loss.

***Thank you so much for reading Bella's Way. I hope it does affect you positively, and that you will feel moved to make a donation to one or more epilepsy charities.***



*Part 1*

*The Poems*

*See! (prelude)*

*Bella's Way*

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*Gunge*

*Departures*

*For Christina*

*For Sas*

*For Bella*

***Bella's Way***

I watched you make your attentive breakfast  
On that awful day that will outlast  
The way you sculpted fruit's a wonder  
Girl you had a bright future

Arm round your shoulder I took a chance  
You didn't shrug me as I glanced  
"Want to see another way?"  
What you said I will not say!

Your way got stronger as time went on  
Your hopes were my hopes all along  
The future's sweet as your fine face  
We loved to join in your splendid race

Tried to watch over you - not always there  
Or I was elsewhere with other cares  
Then you came home again that was tough  
Freedom independence and all that stuff

When you were small I feared all the time  
When you grew up I hoped you'd be fine  
We were so alike in many ways  
It's hard to imagine the past few days

Now here we are and look at these people  
They love you Annabel it's that simple  
You touched the hearts of all you met  
We are forever in your debt

So off you go in a new direction  
You will always be here in my reflection  
I love you Annabel more than words can say  
I will always love you and Bella's Way

### *Equipment and Uniforms*

The ambulance came too quickly  
Solid men silently stole my loving kiss  
Air in the room moved and changed  
With their equipment and uniforms

Had to leave you then  
Didn't want to go  
We waited downstairs  
Frozen in time  
It didn't look good

The older man appeared too soon  
Floating through the doorway  
I knew you had gone  
So sorry he said - nothing we could do  
As we all stood swaying together - alone

Felt blood searing my face  
Incredulous heat swelling my eyes  
Could not see beyond blackness  
Pouring over my shaking body

He was so strong and real  
And I could not believe him  
Wanted to insist - go back up!  
There must be a way  
With your equipment and uniforms

He stayed so still - head down and  
You and I held each other lest we'd fall.  
Following him back up  
He said - I will be here  
And he waited outside - alive

We cried over you  
Held on to you  
Pressed you  
Rocked you  
Touched and stroked you  
Clinging on to real life

Air in the room moving and changing



***The Day After (Happy Birthday)***

Looking blindly out  
Through pains of glass  
Screaming at grey-green garden  
Sitting round square table  
Silent cushioned in disbelief  
Together in mauve-mist

It's my Birthday and she's not here!

Heads down in hunched silence  
Hard elbows on bleak wood  
No sound  
None

Scorching mobile chimes cut through sharp air  
Each one piercing my heart  
Lead arrows

Happy Birthday to you – Happy Birthday to you –  
Happy Birthday dear.....

Your phone in your bag?  
You did this for me?  
Where are you?

Dashing from the quaking room  
Clutching at shake-heaving chest

Stumbling and falling into the happy birthday  
Chiming in my head

### Arrivals

Can hardly breathe  
    With deepest sympathy  
For all the blooms  
    So sorry for your loss  
By hand and post  
    Lilly and Rose

More every day  
    Our thoughts are with you  
Brought with smiles  
    You are in our prayers  
Known and Not  
    Carnation and Orchid

Ringin' phone  
    Shocked to hear  
Knocking door  
    Knowing you care  
Staying in  
    Stephanosis and Flesia

Quiet gatherings  
    Loved not forgotten  
Silent sobs  
    Wishing you peace  
Closing doors  
    Wheat and Artichoke

Food at the door  
    May you find strength  
Hugs and space  
    Touched by the memory  
Tears and looks  
    Sunflower and Lizzie

### *Crying*

Jaw crushing  
Tongue mushing  
Mind rushing  
Tear jerking  
Still crying  
In the car  
Still crying  
On the train  
Still crying

Eye squeezing  
Nose dripping  
Lip slushing  
Head rubbing  
Still crying  
Walking home  
Still crying  
In the shop  
Still crying

Not caring  
Just staring  
View flaring  
I'm glaring  
Still crying  
In the mirror  
Still crying  
In bed  
Still crying

Hands wringing  
Stop wiping  
Try singing  
Silent winging  
Still crying

In my head  
Still crying

*Will you be gone for long?*

Again! Searing lava bursts out  
Through throat-gates that cannot stop  
Smelting tears that tear  
My heart apart  
Stares

It hurts so much to be here -  
Where are you?  
Where have you gone?

Again! Feels like I'm floating down  
Dark and empty the deep well  
Will embrace me with velvet walls  
And pressing silence  
Sleeps

It aches so much to be here -  
Where were you?  
Where did you go?

Again! Blinding light at night  
Fright and shuddering shadows  
To wake to and fro  
Rocking will not sleep  
Or slip into dreams of questions  
So low

I cry so much to be here -  
How are you?  
Will you be gone for long?

***Broken***

Empty chair  
Broken empty chair  
Broken family empty chair

Empty dad  
Broken empty dad  
Broken family empty dad

Empty mum  
Broken empty mum  
Broken family empty mum

Broken sister  
Broken empty sister  
Broken family empty sister

Broken mum  
Broken dad  
Broken sister

Broken empty lost daughter  
Broken empty lost sister

We miss you

Lots

### ***Blind***

They can't we can't I can't get it right

Don't want to be with people who know me  
See me only as the one with loss  
Don't want people who know what happened  
To treat everything as normal  
As if nothing  
Has happened

They can't we can't I can't get it right

Want to run away and hide  
Even from close friends and family  
The reflection of my pain  
In their eyes is too searing  
It pierces my heart and fills me up  
To bursting

They can't we can't I can't

*Get it right!*

Want them to try harder  
To understand hold me  
And leave me alone  
So that I can disappear and learn to see again  
All there is to see  
Though I may be blind

Oh to be the one who says the silly things  
Rather than the one who hears them

### ***Searching***

Feel like a thief  
Going through your boxes and bags  
Searching and turning over  
Each piece and peering

Doesn't seem right  
The effect of your effects  
Belongings longing for a Home  
In our hearts

Beauty products  
Tapes and CD's  
Lifestyle magazines  
Artwork

Your glinting hair coiled on a brush  
Loosely wound around  
To catch and wound  
A free strand lands in my palm

Do you remember me always saying  
Not to brush your hair in the car?  
You always smiled and ignored me  
I still find them day-by-day

This thread - this line of your life  
Which I hold tight in my hands  
Fine gossamer treasure  
Slipping through unsure fingers

What am I searching for?  
Signs of love?  
Signals of attachment and caring?

[Wondering if you loved me]

***Place***

Three maps to locate  
Dead Woman's Gate  
Would make you smile

Your secret smile  
As we watch TV together

Down up down  
Soft chalk blue flint damp soil  
Melting wax leaves crisp choc-needles  
Day white night black berries  
Crimson roots still stumps patient trees  
Invisible song on long hazel  
Stooping deer proud goats  
Bench bird box pheasant

You would so love this Bella  
What a place to be!

And here you are  
Silent slow head carried down  
We walk towards you  
Sun setting through canopies of love

This peaceful place  
Where people lay young and old  
Together and close by  
Will I lose you amongst them?

Your laugh and curling up  
On the chair



### *In Your Room*

You worked so hard  
Did it all by yourself  
Assembling, scraping, painting  
Except the bed  
I helped you with the bed

And you were genuinely grateful  
Such a small thing - that moment of thanks  
But it meant so much to me  
Such a kind girl!

You finished your room and it's lovely  
Bright airy and all the trimmings  
Bought with your own money from your own job  
TV, Hi Fi and everything

We delighted in the pride you took  
In being able to do this  
For yourself  
Such a grown up girl!

Young woman in a hurry  
Had to get it right,  
Before you went away  
Did you know you were leaving us?

I sometimes sit with you  
And no, don't worry, we haven't turned it into a shrine  
It's a place to be - one of many places where you are  
And I know you don't mind us being here

In your room

### ***Sounds So Good***

Time for your music now  
Hearing sensing being here  
Listen to this Dad!  
Now.... I listen

'O' shaped sighing mouth  
Face bathed in oil tears  
Soaking shadows  
Now.... I listen all the time

This is so good Bella  
Here together  
Just as we are  
Now.... we listen

I want to  
To tell you  
To tell you how much  
I want to tell you how much I really

Now.... your music  
Sounds so good

Songs written for you  
Specially chosen by you  
Of course they were  
They're on your player

Now .... we listen together

Sounds so good

Sounds *so* good

***MTVessel***

YaDa YaDeeee  
Yada YaDaaaa  
YaDa YaDeeee  
Yada YaHAHaaaa

Going through my head  
Constantly for three days now

Summer Holiday Clubbing song  
Happy young guys  
Standing on aircraft wing  
MTV

As I write these words  
It's there in the background  
It's there when I talk to people  
It's there when I read  
It's there as I sleep

YaDa YaDeeee  
Yada YaDaaaa  
YaDa YaDeeee  
Yada YaHAHaaaa

Incongruous jollity  
With a relentless beat!

How do I feel?  
How *do* I feel?  
Drained  
Empty

YaDa YaDeeee  
Yada YaDaaaa  
YaDa YaDeeee  
Yada YaHAHaaaa

***Help!***

Wanted to help you  
Never seemed to work for you  
Always 'getting on at you'  
Struggling to get on with you

I help people don't I?  
That's what I do don't I?  
Had to try didn't I?  
Wanted to help you too - why shouldn't I?

You knew it saddened me  
Expect you were getting back at me  
Wanted to have a go at me  
Don't know why for the life of me!

We both knew that time was precious  
Made your mark - you were audacious  
Wish you had been more gracious  
But life isn't always so spacious

Tried to help as best I could  
I feel you really understood  
Truly we knew we should  
Be friends as ever we would

Can I get some help over here?  
I'm not the all-seeing seer  
Things aren't what they appear  
Feels as if the end is near

Down and up and round again  
All that's real is in the pain  
How can we ever explain?  
Help is good for nothing it's plain

Unless you know I always cared  
Even when in fights we shared  
Blindness came and tempers flared  
Nothing there to be spared

All is done and there it is  
A heart with several beats amiss  
This is so and this is this  
Help me over this cruel abyss

### *Gunge*

Lemon-squeezed dry eyes  
Gush onto fresh peeled  
Rubbed raw lids that crawl  
With stinging tears and gunge  
That no sponge could ever  
Soak up my thoughts  
Of sky and lines  
Leading me away  
To run and play  
With time that has no hands  
Feel the cold of all  
People who don't know what to say  
What does it matter anyway?

I could fill a bucket with this gunge  
That oozes up from stomach deep  
Fried breath and squeeze  
Dry the wringer of mind  
How you go  
Far away from here and there  
Is no way out of the ordinary  
Lives we all have  
A heart which beats about the burning bush  
Fire at anything that moves  
Me to tears again  
With stinging fears and  
Gunge



### Departures

I sense  
Where we are now  
At daybreak on this journey  
Marking space  
And timing

I know  
Your place between tree and stump  
Brings peace to all who see  
Looking over you  
And crying

I hear  
Sound of chest-sobs and sighs  
Seeing others walking by  
Wondering why  
And knowing

I feel  
Kneeling here with you and light  
Touching chalk soil and stillness  
Never wanting to leave  
And going

***For Christina***

I almost forgot you lost your baby  
Carried and born from your body  
Bella was with you from the start  
Now she's in both our hearts

I'm so sorry it is this way  
No woman should see the day  
When offspring leave such awful sorrow  
Just wanting another tomorrow

I can't replace Bella for you  
Watch you walk the morning-dew  
Put her back where she belongs  
Singing soft and gentle songs

I know you love mother earth  
All that's part of giving birth  
We created special life  
Being man and wife

You love your dear sweet girls  
Mum to us is the world  
See you with them flying kite  
Seems so good and real and right

~~~~~

Outside, the fog lingers  
We will entwine our fingers  
Sharing lots more tears  
Joys and sorrows  
No more fears

~~~~~

*For Sas*

My beautiful Sally  
Wedding day so happy  
All so natural easy  
All so bright breezy

Embarrassing speech  
Drew love's surprising tears  
Dawned on me suddenly  
She's no longer an Eveleigh!

So wanted Bella's good side  
Giving more than I should sighed  
Same old story what a bother  
One gets more than the other

Gentle hugs quenched my fears  
She was with us all those years  
Proud of my two girls that day  
Still proud I have to say

Like Grandad's joyous party  
We had such fun were hale and hearty  
You know things always change  
Never quite grasp the range

Now we're all so sad  
At times very mad  
Why's Bella been taken away?  
Your sister just came to stay

Many questions so few reasons  
Only one rock spans the seasons  
That's the love we feel for you  
High above mountain dew

Lead the way with your own life  
Accepting trouble and some strife  
Even when it's so unfair  
That Bella is not there

She loved you Sas her big sister  
Saw sunshine in her flicker  
Wanted what you have too  
It's what sisters always do



***For Bella***

Pride of Self  
Pride of Other  
Pride of Possession  
Pride of Achievement  
Rising above the surface  
I always felt so uncomfortable with pride

But it came true and I felt it strong  
For you at your Graduate Show

We were all so happy  
Ballerina—perfect  
You danced amongst us  
In the warm evening glow

So much free wine surreptitiously sipped  
Almost as if I would never drink again  
Awe of work and talented company  
Smile growing beyond my face

What else would you have gone on to make?  
Such energy and creative focus  
Future exhibitions and joy  
Perhaps even us showing together

It's so hard to smile at all these days  
Sadness sweeps rolling—foamed breakers  
Lifting and pushing me towards fortunes coast

Searching  
I will find you on that sweet shore Bella  
And we will hold hands Children laughing  
Playing in the sun and sculpting sand forever

~~~~~



Bella's Graduate show 2002



## *Part 2*

### *The Mindful Way*

~o~

*Background What is Mindfulness? Seven Pillars*

*Non-Judging Patience Beginners Mind*

*Trust*

*Non-Striving*

*Acceptance*

*Letting Go*

*Searching for a way to become whole again.....*



### ***Background to Mindfulness***

*I returned to work as a psychotherapist probably too quickly after Annabel died, and it became very important to me on a personal level to have support and guidance wherever I could find it.*

*I discovered Mindfulness 3 years ago when I was coming back to clinical practice after years of working in the corporate world.* I did a course at the University of Wales, and started to practice meditation regularly. It seemed like a very good way of helping people with their stresses and fears, and it complimented cognitive behaviour therapy very well. *I had been searching for some kind of spiritual engagement for a long time, and suddenly it seemed like Mindfulness was the way, and I am very glad to have found it.*

The pages that follow, try to capture the essence of some of these Mindful teachings. I believe they may be able to help others in coming to terms with their own grief - whatever the circumstances.

*I hope you will find them as helpful and inspiring as I have, and that maybe you'll be encouraged to look into Mindfulness further and perhaps even develop your own practice.*

### ***What is Mindfulness?***

Following a sudden loss, it's almost impossible to stop the awful turmoil of emotions, the worrying thoughts, and the upsetting physical reactions - if you've experienced this and tried to stop them, you'll know what I mean.

***But can we learn to see and respond to these reactions differently?***

After the initial shock and realisation of the loss of Annabel, the thoughts, feelings and physical reactions I experienced were overwhelming.

***Mindfulness showed me that although I owned these responses, I didn't have to be carried away by them.***  
Much easier said than done!

Mindfulness is the practice of :- ***"Paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgementally"***.

*Jon Kabot-Zinn*

Most of the stress we experience in everyday life is caused by what we **choose** to pay attention to. When we suffer and are depressed and tormented after losing a loved one, we look at everything in a negative way:-

*Can't sleep...Can't bear this...Why did this happen?...Could we have saved her?...Wish it was all a dream...Nobody understands,...Annabel!...So tired...I can't believe it! ...This is so cruel...*

It doesn't feel like we're choosing to think this way - it just seems to happen.

We get carried away on a torrent of thoughts. **Mindfulness** teaches us that we can learn to **see** the thoughts rather than be carried away by them. We can do this if we **consciously, intentionally and purposefully try to cultivate the attitudes of Non-Judging, Patience, Beginners Mind, Trust, Non-Striving, Acceptance and Letting Go**. These are all equally important.



### ***The Seven Pillars of Mindfulness***

If we pay attention in this focused but non-judgemental way, we can learn to face our fears and anguish, accept them and let them go. To be able to do this, we need to know what our current attitudes are, and try to gain an awareness of them in a special way.

*The paradox is to gain awareness of your attitudes towards your personal experience of stress, without trying to change anything about that experience.*

*To be sceptical but open – to see what happens.*

Over the past few months, there have been a lot of opportunities for me to survey my attitudes - too many for comfort.

*Let's look at these pillars of Mindfulness to get an idea of how they work.....*



### *Non- Judging*

When we suffer a shock, one reaction is to start becoming critical and to judge oneself and others more harshly.

I already have a tendency in this direction anyway, and I found that although most of the time I was too grief-stricken to do this much, at times the reaction did get worse.

*It was almost as if the emotions built up to a pitch and then I needed to dump my feelings or lash out.*

Also, I have a natural tendency to be a bit hard on myself and others in setting standards sometimes, and they are always difficult to achieve.

*This is a characteristic of strength perhaps in getting things done, but not so good when having to endure excessive emotion.*

Mindfulness reminded me how important it is to be aware of these tendencies, so that under the added pressures of the loss I would be able to *prevent some of the over-reactions.*

The other aspect of judging that is important is the tendency to blame, and again I have to admit this is also already a strong tendency with me.

*It was often a joke in the family that if someone hurt themselves accidentally, Dad's first reaction was to blame!*

I suppose it's the anxiety that prompts this reaction - it doesn't help and it doesn't really make sense, but there we are. Had I not been helped by Mindfulness to be more aware, these reactions would no doubt have been more frequent and more extreme, and gotten me into lots more trouble.

## *Patience*

Acting quickly and impulsively is an over-reaction, an impatience, causing a loss of temper, loss of concentration, loss of stability or equilibrium. I normally suffer with impatience - a lot - but I think I was less affected by this as events unfolded. I was probably too numb and shocked to over-react too much with impatience - everything seemed to be going in slow-motion.

*But as time wore on, I did experience a resurgence of impatience and irritability, I suppose when everything began to sink in. And then I think I became a bit hard to live with, and kind of angry.*

*Meditating has been a good way to be aware of this tendency, and it has helped me to try to prevent the worst excesses of impatience making things worse.*

And when I haven't succeeded in the prevention stakes, I have resorted to humble apology - when I've become aware of what is happening.

For instance, the slightest thing can spark me off, such as when I was vacuuming the other day and went into Annabel's room and dusted and put some things away.

I hadn't realised how much this had affected me until I found myself getting very cross with my wife about something really trivial. Vacuuming had reminded me that I had been doing that on the morning she died, and that set off a whole distressing train of thoughts.

*I try to be more Mindful now so that I can be aware of all the things in everyday life that can trigger great emotions.*

Mindfulness says to learn to do this - but *not for the purpose of avoiding the feelings*. You can't really avoid them - you have to turn to face them. *Learning to be more patient in dealing with your actions and activities in everyday life can help you to stop being so tense and irritable, and it can help you to stop taking it out on others so much.*



### ***Beginner's Mind***

To a child everything is possible, everything can change, and everything in a child's world is new, fresh, interesting and exciting.

***After a loss, your whole world loses its colour and vitality, becomes empty and nothing seems as though it can ever be 'alive' again.*** I certainly felt as if - at times - I myself was dying, and I lost a lot of my curiosity and fascination for life.

***It may be that you lost some of that ability to see the world through child-like eyes a long time before losing a loved-one.*** We often do, just by sheer pressure of having to conform to the forces of growing-up and everyday life. Has that happened to you, or have you managed to retain some of your wonderment and joy of life?

***Trying to find your way back to a beginner's mind - to see things through the eyes of a child - can refresh and revive you.*** Of course a child is very much a free-spirit and is able to creatively think along with almost anything from the past or the future.

***Sometimes this leads to the fears and nightmares we all experience.*** This is a less than pleasant aspect of being a child, because everything seems so real and totally believable.

A child has the ability to be engrossed and really focused and naturally, this can mean they end up being swept away into a world which is absolutely ***outside*** of the present moment here and now. They get so into it that they become almost oblivious to everything else around them.

So I don't think Mindfulness advocates that we should do everything like a child, because that would mean becoming transfixed by everything outside the present moment. I think the Mindful approach suggests we look at everything with fresh wonderment, curiosity and amazement ***without getting carried away.***

***Almost as if we'd never been there, never seen the film and never got the T-shirt, but instead, we'd been in line excitedly waiting to go in!***

## Trust

When you take care to trust, you're accepting things just as they are.

*When we're feeling strong, we tend to trust in our own abilities, intentions and actions.*

When we feel secure, we also tend to trust in the guidance and wisdom of others when we seek their support and care. We can openly and honestly share all our fears and concerns, and we have a sense of faith and trust that others will help us.

*When we lose a loved-one, our faith and trust in ourselves and others is severely weakened. We become very inward-focused, but in a kind of self-destructive way.*

*And that's the paradox* – by accepting things as they are you are able to work in a more balanced way, more consistently, enthusiastically and energetically, because you know that it's what you do in the present moment that really counts.

I have to admit this has been another weakness of mine - *not finding it easy to trust and depend on others and losing confidence and faith in myself.* Particularly under stress.

*And when you suffer a loss, all those natural weaknesses and insecurities - whether you like it or not - are paraded madly in front of you.*

*Some kind of torture!* Just at the point when you want to be strong and hold yourself together for others as well as for your own sake, the old insecurities and lack of trust creep back in.

Mindfulness shows you this in all its glory, and on a good day you will learn to acknowledge, accept and *even smile at it.*

### *Non - Striving*

Striving to overcome weariness and depression and loss, is *exhausting*.

Trying to live up to your own and others expectations of how to deal with the loss, is *exhausting*.

Being exhausted and striving to overcome your exhaustion, is *exhausting!*

*Mindfulness offers us another way.*

Strive less, and give yourself more time calmly sitting and accepting things just as they are - because they already are.

Again, easier said than done, when you've just suffered a cruel blow and you're still reeling from it. *And at first glance doesn't that Mindful way look like giving up?*

*Not if you do it Mindfully.*

Working hard and immersing myself in several projects has been an important part of coping with my loss. *I try not to use all the activity as a means of escape.* Instead, I do whatever I'm doing as Mindfully as I can, so that I'm aware of what I'm thinking, feeling and sensing in the present moment.

*It's so easy just to bury yourself in stuff in order to block off all the emotions, and Mindfulness shows us how to be aware of that tendency so that we can see it and let it go.*

That's why I've found writing and reading the poems so helpful - I work hard, but the work I'm doing is helping me to face up to the feelings. I just have to make sure that the work doesn't outstrip the Mindfulness.

And that *is* hard work. *I know I'm getting it when I feel calmer and more present with myself.*

## Acceptance

There are some things about ourselves - what we do, what we think and feel, and some things that happen to us, that it's just not possible to predict or change.

*Stuff happens.....what has passed has passed, and what is to come, we don't know.*

What we do know is that here and now in this present moment we can make a real difference by what we choose to do or not do - *what we choose to pay attention to.*

*Trying to control or force ourselves to experience each moment in certain ways doesn't work.* I can tell myself I won't react to this song, or that I won't get upset to see Annabel's shoes, and I can try to avoid the possibility of being upset in this way, but it just doesn't work. Not for me anyway.

I know some people who are really much more tough-minded than me, and they try very hard to control their experiences of life, *but it doesn't even work for them.*

*In fact the harder we seem to try to control them, the worse the feelings and thoughts and sensations seem to get.*

So what do we do? Give up and give in and go into a dolefull collapse? We often do, in a state of exhaustion. But *that's not the Mindful way.*

*The Mindful way is turning towards our fears and horrors and learning to accept things just as they are.*

Accepting ourselves just as we are, and our situation just as it is, *here and now in the present moment* is all we can really do.....and we need to do that right now, *purposefully and intentionally*.....in each fresh and new moment.

## *Letting Go*

We all have a natural tendency to want to hang on to things – sometimes good, and perversely, even bad things – *painful or happy memories and imaginings.*

It's like hanging on to someone you love to stop them from falling or being swept away from you, or going over and over a really happy occasion in your mind. *It can be a desperate struggle and sometimes a joyous peace - and you just don't want to let it go.*

*When losing someone in tragic or traumatic circumstances is such a real and vivid experience involving all the senses, it seems that the trauma impresses itself indelibly on your mind so that it will never fade.*

One of the exercises I do with my patients is to ask them to *imagine a photo album* containing snapshots of all the things that have ever happened to them in their lives so far - good and bad things.

I ask them to flick through and glance at all the pictures. *If they're OK with this*, I ask them to go back to one that they were particularly attracted to.

Sometimes it turns out the picture recalls a really *happy* time and sometimes it recollects a very *sad* time. If it's a bad memory, I might ask them if they'd be willing to destroy the picture - perhaps to tear it up, throw it away and even burn it.

*When they've done this to their satisfaction and they're convinced it's gone, I ask them to return to the page in the album where the picture had been.*

Yes you guessed, generally it's still there, or it re-appears. *We can't completely change or destroy what has already passed and we can't guess what will happen in the future.*

Letting go is a positive step towards being able truly to experience and make the most of the present moment.

And as Jon Kabat-Zinn says, *"We only have moments to live"*.



### *Part 3*

#### *The Formal Practice of Mindfulness*

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*Background   Learning to be Still   Seeing all there is to See*

*What is Meditation?   The Breath   Back to the Breath*

*Intro to the Body Scan   The Body Scan*

*Past and Future*

*Intro to the Sitting Meditation   The Sitting Meditation*

*Stepping Aside*

*Yoga   Falling Awake*

*Turning towards your difficulties, sorrow, anguish and loss and facing them just as they are.....*



### ***Formal Practice Background***

I know what you're thinking..... these seven pillars of Mindfulness.....

***Non-Judging  
Patience  
Beginners Mind  
Trust  
Non-Striving  
Acceptance  
Letting Go***

All well and good as basic principles, but how do you put them into practice?

***There are two ways - one is through regular formal practice, and the other is through informal practice in everyday life. You can also learn through Yoga.***

***The formal practice involves learning to be still and seeing all there is to see.***

I'll say something about stillness next.



### ***Learning to be Still***

The essence of Mindfulness is learning to be **still**.

Learning to see all there is to **see**.

All there is to **hear**.

All there is to **feel**.

***Being still means doing nothing. Doing nothing is very hard. Especially when you're in distress.***

I found myself to be constantly restless and having to do things, to stay busy. If I stopped for a moment, I felt overwhelmed by everything.

***Being still and doing nothing is difficult, but in the moments you try, it can be quite a revelation.***

***You become aware of a multitude of feelings, jumbled confusing thoughts and all sorts of bodily sensations, many of which can be quite distressing. It's like turning towards your fears rather than running away and avoiding them by keeping busy.***

Not the obvious choice - we don't want to make ourselves feel worse.

But ***that's the paradox***, if you can sit still for a while and just be with your thoughts, feelings and sensations, you gradually learn to accept them and become more calm.

By doing nothing, you take on a new perspective and that's where the calmness is.

And if you could become still, why would you do this nothing anyway? What's the purpose? ***Mindfulness says there is no purpose other than to be still and experience everything just as it is.***



### *Seeing all there is to See*

*Take a moment to sit calmly and imagine you're by the side of a river. See yourself sitting on a large comfortable rock in the foreground, as the river flows by you endlessly.* There are other rocks in the river and water speeds and crashes over them into the distance.

*Watching the river, you begin to notice lots of objects floating by. These objects are all the thoughts, feelings and sensations you've had so far in your life. All of them - even those which are yet to come. Gets a bit packed in the river doesn't it?!*

As you look at these thoughts, feelings and sensations - from time to time - you begin to be attracted by certain events, stories from the past in memory, and others from the future in imagination. You find it hard to let go of them.

*What happens? Well yes, you get swept away, because you find you're constantly diving in after them trying to see and understand them better, trying to sort them out, trying to destroy or cherish them.....*

*And as you're carried away, inevitably you get beaten up on the rocks, half drowned and swept off into the distance.*

It's very easy to get carried away with all this mental activity. Especially when troubled by memories of what happened and what you imagine happened and what will happen in the future - it's so easy to get drawn into endless inner torment.

*And does trying to control all this activity help? Have you ever tried to stop it? Just seems to make it worse doesn't it?*

Only if you calmly accept that you're being carried away by horrible or attractive thoughts, and feelings, and you gently swim back to the rock to sit awhile, can you become still and calm again. I have to do that so much.....I am calmer.....a bit battered.....and very damp!

*Learning to be still and see all there is to see, can be achieved through the practice of meditation.* We'll talk about meditation next.

## *What is Meditation?*

To meditate is to *pay attention* - mostly to the activity of your mind - and also your body too. *Everything we pay attention to and become aware of, is created by the process of our mind.* Even aches and pains - that's because we use language to tell ourselves we have a pain. So whether we like it or not, the mind gets involved in everything we do. Normally, when we're not meditating, we pay attention for what we think is a *real* purpose. Like for example *preparing ourselves for action by looking at traffic lights* so we can get moving, or stop when we need to. We don't normally just sit there and observe the lights and other vehicles, people and everything. Just sitting there - could be embarrassing or dangerous. *We pay attention to help us figure things out, so we know what to do next.*

*In meditation we don't try to figure anything out at all, second-guess or solve anything, we just learn to sit still and see everything passing by, without trying to get anywhere, achieve anything, take action, or succeed in any way.*

*So meditating is not at all what we're used to.*

When we meditate, we pay attention to *our breathing, areas of our body, our emotions and also our thoughts* - looking at any mental activity that's going on. We choose something to meditate about - *pay attention to* - like our breathing, and we focus on that. Then we stay with that focus for a while so we can see what's happening.

There are many forms of meditation, and the way I have learned the practice, is based on the work of Jon Kabat-Zinn, who is an American physician who specialises in *Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction*. This approach to Mindfulness doesn't involve chanting and mantras, and has a very open, rather than religious approach to spirituality. Other groups I've attended do have a more worshipful basis and they will often use prayer at the beginning and end of a meditation practice. *If you look, I'm sure you'll find the right approach for you.*

The next page shows breathing as an example of a meditation. *We use the breath as a way of 'anchoring' to the present moment.*

## ***The Breath***

As you sit there, reading these words, gently turn to focus your attention on your breathing and **know** that you're breathing in..... and **know** you're breathing out. Perhaps noticing your breath as it gently enters and leaves at your nostrils.

*Use your imagination to picture a soothing and calming bright warm light entering your body as you **breathe in**. And then as you **breathe out**, picture all the stress and tension leaving you in the form of a dark cloud which gradually evaporates. On every in-breath feeling more comfortable and calm and still, as the bright warm light infuses the whole of your body.*

*On every out-breath feeling that all the stress and tension is leaving you and you can see it evaporating out there in front of you. You may also want to imagine the tension draining away from your face, draining away down through your arms and out through your hands and draining away down through your legs and out through your feet.*

*Breathing in this way re-connects us with the present moment, here and now and helps us to come back to a place where we can just be aware of everything rather than having to be carried away by it all.*

And as we'll see later, that's the point of being more Mindful of all the ordinary everyday routine things we do - why not become more aware of them too?

*When we're unaware, we don't show up, we're absent, we're somewhere else.*

And that somewhere else is not **here and now**, so we're not fully able to appreciate and enjoy each moment of life we have.

### ***Back to the Breath***

Breathing is very natural and until you thought about it just now, you were doing it without having to think about it at all.

*What happens when there's suddenly a very loud noise? Totally unexpected. Right, you stop breathing, or you over-breathe. The other thing that happens, is that you hold your muscles tensely, particularly the ones around your abdomen – as if preparing for a blow or shock of some kind.*

Nature's way of protecting us from danger is to give us **fear**, and fear is very distressing. Normally this only lasts a short while. *After losing someone fear seems to go on forever.*

When you're not full of fear, your breathing is just fine. How do you breathe when you're asleep and not dreaming? *It's perfect, there's a gentle flowing rhythm and you don't have to think about it at all.*

*Learning to be aware of how you're breathing, so that you can let tension and stress go is a very important part of becoming more Mindful.*

When we worry and get stressed about what has happened – *it affects our breathing.* When we anticipate and contemplate that other bad things are going to happen – *it affects our breathing.* If you focus your attention on your breathing **right now**, especially the way your abdomen's working – *it affects your breathing!* If you put your hand on your belly and just breathe normally, does it rise and fall in a gentle flowing motion? As you breathe in, does your tummy inflate a little, and as you breathe out, does it go down a bit? *If it's not doing this, it's probably because you're holding on to your muscles in some way and restricting the natural rhythm.*

Your breath should come and go, in and out, naturally without forcing yourself to breathe deeply or to breathe to a count. And when it does, it's *like riding the waves of your own natural breath, knowing that you're breathing in... and knowing you're breathing out.* It's calming, comforting and relaxing as well.



### ***Intro to the Body Scan***

A lying down meditation called the Body Scan is a very good way to help us *pay attention* to what's going on in our body - very important when you're under increasing stress. It consists of surveying areas of your body from toe to head, deliberately paying attention to how each part feels - *whatever sensations there are* - including discomfort and pain.

*The idea is not to try to feel a certain way or to achieve any kind of change of state, but instead, to just observe and witness the sensations in each part of your body just as they are - and fall awake.*

I've been in a hall with over 200 people doing the Body Scan and always a few would start snoring! This happens mostly because it may be a time of day for us when we're tired, and lying down with your eyes closed, is enough to send you off - that coupled with someone guiding us in a calming voice.

*The paradox*, is that as you scan your body in this way taking maybe 30 or 40 minutes to do it, *you do become more relaxed - but this is a by-product of paying attention to yourself in this way, not the main purpose.*



## *The Body Scan*

*Practicing the Body Scan is a way of being with yourself - knowing that you're in your body, and becoming whole.* These are the general instructions - why not give it a try?

*Aiming to fall awake*, lie down on your back in a comfortable place.....allow your eyes to close, if that feels OK for you - or leave them open if you're tending to fall asleep.

Gradually become aware of your breathing and feel the rise and fall of your abdomen with each in and out-breath.

Feel your body as a whole and each point of contact you're making with the ground. *Bring your attention to focus on the toes of your left foot*, and as you direct your attention there, see if you can almost breathe into and out of your toes. Imagine your *in-breath* travelling through your body all the way down and *out* through your toes. And then as you *breathe out*, imagine your breath going back *in* through your toes all the way up through your body and out through your nose. *Allow yourself to feel all the sensations there are to feel in your toes.*

If you don't feel anything - *that's fine* - you can allow yourself to feel *not feeling anything*.

When you're ready, take a deeper, more intentional breath in, all the way down to your toes, and on the outbreath gradually begin to move the focus of your attention to become aware of the sole of your foot, your heel, the top of your foot, your ankle...

*Continue to breathe into and out from each region as you observe all the sensations there.*

And then breathe, let go of any tension and move on - moving slowly up your left leg and throughout the rest of your body.

As you come to each region of your body, breathe with each one, let go of any tension and move on.

*Practice as often as you can, and perhaps to begin with, you might want to get a CD Body Scan guide - take a look at the further resources section in this book.*

*Past and Future*

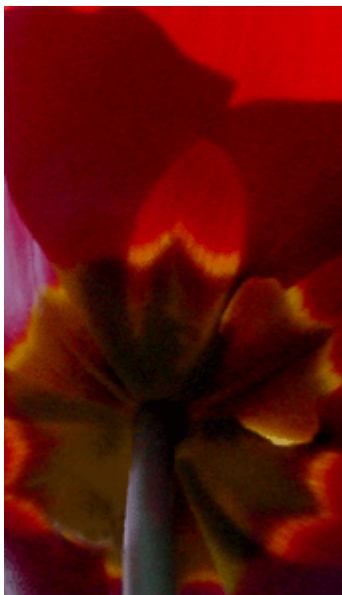
When we're stressed  
We get trapped in past memories  
And Future imaginings  
  
The past has already happened  
We can only reconstruct the past  
The future has not happened yet  
We can only construct the future

Isn't the past and the future  
made up of the present moment?

*When we're stressed and unhappy*

*We're trapped in the past and trapped in the future*





### *Intro to the Sitting Meditation*

Most of the time we're in a whirlwind world of *doing*. In stressful situations, we may become even more frenetic in what we do. *Always keeping busy to block out the reality of our suffering.*

Sitting gives us the chance to get back in touch with *being* instead of doing. *Sitting is non-doing.* Regular practice helps us to restore some balance and perspective, and can give us more patience, inner-stillness, clarity and more peace of mind.

By looking objectively and dispassionately at the reactions, habits, fears and desires of our own mind, sitting gets us to focus on where we are already - *to remind ourselves who we are.* *Setting aside time every day to practice non-doing can sound like just one more thing to do, but once you get started, you can begin to see the value of nourishing yourself in this way.* I'll give you an outline on the next two pages, and again, you can take a class, or be guided by a recording, if that would also help - see the further resources section of this book.



## *The Sitting Meditation*

Sitting on the floor or in a chair, a good posture is very important for this meditation. *Without forcing yourself, just gently allow your back to be upright so that all the weight of your upper body is supported by your spine, and your muscles don't have to do any work at all.* In this way, you sit in a tall, erect, comfortable and dignified posture - feeling the weight of your arms on your shoulders, and the weight of your body down into the chair or floor, and the weight of your legs down to your feet making contact with the floor and 'grounding' you.

Knowing that you're sitting - *here and now* - in this place, just as you are.....and coming to the breath.... knowing that you're breathing in... and out. *Staying in the present, moment by moment, breath by breath.* This is difficult, because your mind naturally wanders and feels it has better things to do. And when that happens, *just notice it, let go and gently escort yourself back to the breath - back to the present moment.*

Even when you try to keep your attention on your breath, in the present moment, *your mind will very naturally go it's own way* - always being drawn towards the thoughts, feelings and sensations passing by.

It doesn't matter how many times your mind wanders - just note it, let go and gently escort your mind back to the breath.

*Back to the present moment.* This helps you to train your mind to be *less reactive and more stable* - cultivating your natural ability to concentrate your mind. *Building and deepening your concentration, and creating inner-strength.*

If you experience discomfort (*I used to get a lot of back pain at first*) you can learn to work with it and breathe through it. *Then the pain gradually fades into the background and takes its place amongst all the other sensations you're aware of instead of over-riding them.*

During the meditation, other 'objects' can be used as a focus for your attention. You've already seen how thoughts can be used in the earlier example of the river. *We also focus on emotions and other sensations that arise in our mind.* Whatever they may be, we simply observe them, let go and gradually and calmly escort ourselves back to the breath. *Back to the present moment.*

## Stepping Aside

When we're stressed and unhappy, *everything* is a struggle.

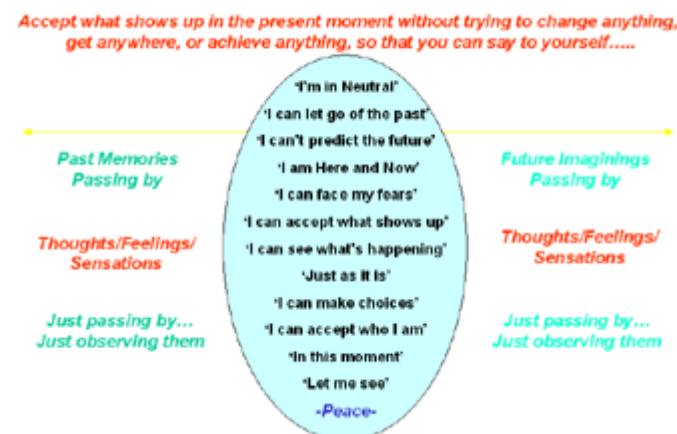
By practicing being more Mindful of the present moment and seeing all there is to see, hear and feel, we bring ourselves back on to the rock where we can become calm again. Back to the breath and back to the *real* present moment *to see what's really happening here and now*.

And what *is* really happening? The *truth* is, these are only *memories and imaginings of the past and the future*. Not happening here and now, even though our mind makes them so vivid that they seem to be really happening right now. *But they're not*. What's happening here and now is that we're *choosing to pay attention* to all those mental events, and getting carried away with some of them. Personally, I've found it far easier to creatively think along with the catastrophic memories of what happened, and frightening imaginings of what might happen in the future, than to watch it all go by. *And that's the problem*. Through practice, I'm beginning to realise that, and let go when I can.

*It's really not easy at all to turn towards your fears and horrors and learn to let them go.*

We seem to be magnetically drawn towards all our negative thoughts, feelings and sensations, and more often than not, the negative, unhelpful troubled ones get the better of us.

That's why regular practice of being Mindful is so helpful. By learning to step aside and take a different perspective, we can see that we are trapping ourselves and not really living at all in the present moment.





## Yoga

Yoga *is* meditation.

Yoga is about ***paying attention*** to different movements and postures of the body, and combining that attention with awareness of the breath.

***Yoga helps you to Focus your mind and stimulate your body.***

Without forcing yourself into positions that feel uncomfortable or are difficult to get out of.

Practicing in full awareness of your body.

***Focusing on awareness, the breath, and balance.***

Perhaps at first, attending a class with a qualified yoga teacher, or being guided by a video or CD.



### *Falling Awake*

I did an 8 week course when I began the meditation practice. It involved learning the body scan, the sitting meditation and yoga for 2 weeks each. That daily practice was combined with reading about Mindfulness, and was very helpful in getting me started on my own self-guided practice. I soon found that I was *not as relaxed as I thought I was*, and I was tending to over-react in some situations where I needn't have.

*And it's true that one of the wonderful by-products of learning to be Mindful, is that you do become more relaxed and calm, and you don't clock-up so many points for stress.* I say by-products, because - as I mentioned before - *relaxation or 'becoming more relaxed' is not the main purpose of Mindfulness.*

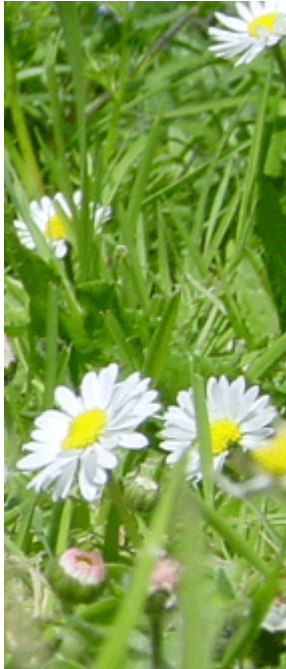
It takes a while to realise this, because we're so used to the idea of taking medication for stress, and doing things to make us feel better - we think, "Isn't Mindfulness supposed to do that to us too?" *I think the answer's no.*

However, to practice being Mindful we need to be awake, and so instead of falling asleep, perhaps you can think of the practice as *"Falling Awake!"*

We practice being more Mindful of the present moment so that we can *see all there is to see, hear all there is hear and feel all there is to feel.* And the tough part is - "Whatever that may be". *Learning to accept and let go.*

Rest assured, if you do practice regularly, you will become more relaxed and less likely to over-react to stress.

And that's despite the fact you haven't deliberately worked on being relaxed - as I said, you get that as a by-product of being wide awake and paying attention to everything there is to pay attention to - *without getting swept away by it all.*



## *Part 4*

### *Everyday Life Mindful Practice*

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*'Real Life'*

*Listening to Music and Eating*

*Walking and Hugging*

*Routine Mindfulness*

*Ordinary everyday life activities can be more Mindful too,  
if you can name something or even feel it, you can be  
Mindful of it .....*

### 'Real Life'

I found that for a long time after Annabel died, **regular formal daily meditation was difficult for me**. I either couldn't get myself up in time, or I wouldn't allow myself to stay focused for long enough.

Fortunately, because of my work - I regularly teach others how to meditate - this kept me doing it and so I didn't lapse completely.

**However, teaching is not the same as meditating for oneself**, and eventually I joined a local group and got back to my own practice.

If, because of exceptional stresses and strains, you find you can no longer do the formal practice as often as you'd want to, there's always **practice in 'real life'**.

So that whatever you're doing, you can learn to do those things more Mindfully, without having to sit still and do nothing.

Could you make a list of all the routine activities you get involved in every day?

*Waking up, washing, getting dressed, walking, sitting, talking, eating, drinking, listening, looking, reading, making and receiving calls, writing, driving.....*

These are just a few activities you may be doing. The question is, are you aware of what you're doing as you're doing it?

**Are you really there? Did you show up? Or are you somewhere else?**

If you're not Mindful of what you're doing, you're not truly in the present moment. If that's the case, you can't **really** be aware of and fully appreciate all the moments in your **real** life.

**On the next pages we'll see some examples of how to be more Mindful in everyday life.**

### *Listening to Music*

When I travel on the train to work - normally - if I look around me, *I see a lot of people multi-tasking, and hardly paying attention to one thing at a time at all.*

After Annabel died, I decided to take her MP3 player with me on the train, and instead of reading, or working on the laptop, as well as listening, I really turned towards her and her music as if we were listening to it together. Perhaps you remember the poem I wrote about it earlier on?

*Suddenly all the music and the experience of listening with Annabel came alive. For the first time I really appreciated the sounds, the words and the feelings, and I shared them with her.*

It was and still is a very emotional and special time, and I have to admit it made me realise how much I wished I'd listened to music more with Bella before. She used to put her music on in the car, but I could never really concentrate on it then. Putting aside this time now, especially to listen, I felt was a way of reaching out to her.

*Making time to truly listen, is a wonderful way to say you love someone.*

### *Eating*

*You may find for a while that you can't eat at all, or that when you do eat, you don't enjoy it and it's a real effort to get the food down - or maybe you comfort-eat more than before.*

Chances are you won't be eating Mindfully.

*Eating Mindfully means really using all your senses to be aware of what you're eating and drinking so that you know you're eating and drinking at that moment.*

*Knowing how the food looks* - its size, shape, colour - little details about it. *Knowing how it smells* - how strong, how delicate, fragrant, pungent. *Knowing how it feels* - noticing changes of texture, temperature, consistency.

*Mindfully taking your time to really appreciate the food as you gradually transfer the life-giving nutrients to your body.*

### Walking

*Walking in a daze is very easy when you don't know what's happening and your whole life is falling apart.*

Walking mindfully means *knowing that you're walking - here and now.*

Which means being aware of your body as you move through space. Perhaps even feeling the air on your skin.

*Knowing* that your left leg is moving forwards and feeling the weight of your body on your right leg, down through your right foot. Being aware of the changing pressures on your knees, ankles and hips.

And then *noticing* your weight transfer to the other foot as you move forwards. And the movement of your upper-body and arms.

*And knowing that it's you that's walking and moving here - at this time - just as you are.*

### Hugging

We've done a lot of hugging over the past few months - and it's not always easy. If you get into a situation where you're hugging people, are you hugging them or are they hugging you?

*How much of the hugging is Mindful and real, or mindless and like a ritual?*

How much for oneself and how much for the other person?

*Hugging is holding on to someone to feel they're real and alive.*

*Giving yourself to the other person momentarily for a special reason - and knowing that you're doing that.*

*Knowing that you're breathing and the other person is breathing, here and now in this present moment.*





### ***Routine Mindfulness***

These are just a few examples. Many activities in ordinary everyday life are routine, and we do them almost completely on *auto-pilot*. Why not make a list of all the routine things you do each day. Could any of them be done more Mindfully?

As you do these activities, ask yourself :- *Could I be more awake? Do I really know what I'm doing right now? Did I show up? Am I fully present? Where are my thoughts? How am I feeling? What's my breathing doing? Why am I doing this?* As you practice Mindfulness in everyday life, you'll get better and better at bringing your attention to focus so that you can fully appreciate all there is to appreciate in the present moment.

*This doesn't mean thinking about what you're doing, it means directly perceiving what you're paying attention to right there and then at that very moment.* Thinking about what you're doing, is only a part of everything you *can* be aware of in the present moment. Being with yourself more Mindfully from moment to moment in this everyday practice, helps you to *break free from the automatic descent into grinding and bewildering grief.* That path is laid out clearly in front of you - but you don't need constantly to take it.



## *Part 5*

### *Difficult Issues*

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*Saying Sorry*

*Kindness*

*Loving-Kindness*

*Friends and Relatives*

*Sense of Self*

*Changing and Transforming*

*Time*

*When someone you love dies suddenly and unexpectedly,  
there are many things left unfinished, unspoken,  
unknown.....*

## Saying Sorry

I get waves of anxious feelings, memories and regrets when I vividly recall occasions that Bella and I didn't get on with one another and had disagreements. *These were times when we were both trying to assert our 'rights' and independence, and I think we really did hurt and upset one another a lot.* It didn't last long, and we usually said sorry and made it up - it wasn't a big deal. There was always that solid foundation of love.

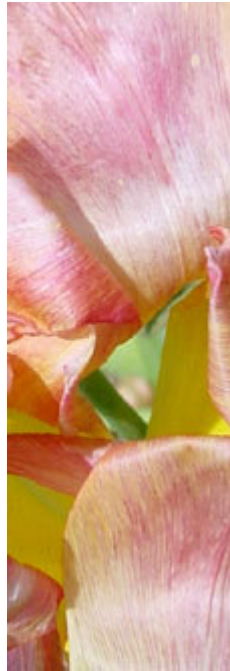
But when you lose someone, these kind of falling-out situations come to the fore, seem to get exaggerated out of all proportion and mess a lot with your mind. Doesn't matter how you play the memory, it always seems worse the more you look at it. *And of course in Mindful terms it's all in the past anyway.*

One very helpful piece of Mindful insight I gained, was from a talk I listened to by a Vietnamese Buddhist monk called Thich Nhat Hanh. He said *sit and meditate, and in your mind, invite the person into your presence and actually say sorry to them.* It's as if they're really there and you can really say sorry and embrace them. Then a kind of peaceful forgiveness takes place.

*I do find being able to say sorry in this way so helpful in dealing with difficult issues from the past, and it's possible to achieve forgiveness on both sides - it usually takes two to make an argument!* The great thing is that in the same way your mind can recall these events almost for the purpose of *torturing you* by replaying them over and over, equally, your mind can recreate here and now the situation and the person again, so that there's an opportunity to make amends. *An outcome with perhaps the expression of sorrow and forgiveness and love.*

*Our mind is really pretty dumb* - it doesn't know the difference between the past, the future or the present - *everything is processed in the present moment, so in reality, even the past takes place in the present moment and also the future takes place in the present as well.* Whether we recall something from the past, or imagine something happening in the future, *it's all the creative imaginary process of the mind - happening here and now.* The best place to experience 'real life' is in the present moment - knowing what's really going on right now.

*Just thoughts, feelings and sensations - mental events passing by from moment to moment.*



### *Kindness*

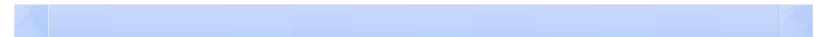
On a good day, we can show kindness, caring, forgiveness, generosity - actually *all those great human qualities that make life seem so incredibly worthwhile.*

If you're like me, I expect you'd like to show and see them more often.

*Unfortunately, there are very few good days if you have been bereaved, and all the sadness seems to blend into one long, endless, empty day and night. Mostly night.*

Sometimes, because we're so wrapped up in our grief, the chances of behaving kindly or even receiving kindness seem to pass us by. *We forget how connected we all are to one another - how dependent we are on the good will and grace of others.* It's almost as if we're cocooned and shut away from the world and everyone in it. *Mindfulness teaches us a way to re-connect with the world, so that we can be more open, more aware and willing to give and receive kindness again.*

The next pages may give you an idea how to do this.



## ***Loving-Kindness***

***Sit calmly*** and allow whatever thoughts, feelings and sensations you become aware of, to just be there, just out there in front of you, just as they are.

Whilst still being aware of all your mind's restless activity, gently escort yourself back to the breath, and ***know that you're breathing in.....and know you're breathing out.....know that here you are in this present moment - here and now*** - seeing all your thoughts, feelings and sensations, just as they are, without trying to change or get anywhere with them.....And as you sit, ***bring to mind a time when you were loved and cared for, in a way that was totally non-judging and undemanding, so that you knew you were loved and accepted just as you are, and the person loving you accepted you in every way, without trying to change you, or even understand you.*** As you recall and recreate this experience from the past - ***in the present moment*** - allow yourself to be aware of how it really feels to be loved in that unselfish totally giving way. And then whilst still experiencing with all your senses, that feeling of being loved, ***come back to the breath to remind yourself you're here in the present moment.***

Here and now, gently focus your attention and call to mind a person whom you hardly know. Perhaps someone you might have just seen and may never have spoken to. ***Then see if you can turn towards that person and call to mind the powerful sense of loving-kindness you just experienced before, and offer that in its entirety to that person you hardly know.....*** Here and now, gently focus your attention and call to mind and see yourself sitting here. ***Then see if you can turn towards yourself and call to mind the powerful sense of loving-kindness you experienced before, and offer that in its entirety to yourself, accepting yourself just as you are and not wanting to change anything about yourself at all.....*** ***To direct Loving-Kindness towards someone you hardly know, is not the kind of thing we're used to doing is it?*** It can feel awkward and difficult, and we may shy away from it. We may even find it difficult to direct these feelings towards ourselves - especially if we find it difficult to recall a time when we felt really loved as an individual. I find this practice very reassuring and a great reminder of my connectedness to others - even those I don't know at all. It teaches me humility and patience and gives me the chance to be.... well just nicer to myself and others. ***This is a very difficult space to find when you're grieving, and when we're fast drifting away, the practice of Loving-Kindness can really help to guide us back into re-connecting with and rejoining the world.***

## *Friends and Relatives*

### *When there's a tragedy - everyone comes running.*

But not always - some of us feel overwhelmed and have to back-off.

*Everyone deals with emotion in different ways*, and sometimes that means a close friend or relative can't be with you in a way that you need them to - even though what you want seems obvious to you.

### *Just be with me, hold me, listen to me, be still with me.....*

To see your closest friend or relative suffering and in pain is just too much sometimes - *just too awful.*

This happened to me with a couple of friends and relatives, and at the time I couldn't understand it because *complete strangers* were able to give me more comfort, and I thought - that's not what I want - I want those closest to me to give me comfort.....

But they couldn't give it to me in the ways I needed, and I found it very difficult to tell them what I wanted directly.

*In my case this caused a build-up of frustration, and some anger.* At times this did cause me to take out some of those feelings on those closest to me - *until I realised what was going on.* Luckily it didn't lead to too many problems, and it released a bit of tension on my side. *And yes, 'dumping' on people is not the Mindful way - but sometimes that's the way it happens.*

It also provided an opportunity for others to show more caring towards me on their side.

I suppose as long as we can become more aware and know that this is happening, *there's a chance to prevent any harm being done.*

*And if damage is created in the heat of the moment - we can always recover and sincerely say sorry in another moment.*

## *Sense of Self*

Most people I know - myself included - have a *"Me, Myself and I" kind of approach to life.*

Our view of the world is formed by how everything seems to affect *us*, how it seems in relation to *our own experience*. If what we experience doesn't seem to fit with our model of the world, we look for experiences and people and things that *do* reinforce our own view. Some say we do this because we're afraid - afraid of not being able to survive and cope in the world. *Afraid of living, afraid of dying, afraid of everything.* In order to cope with this fear, we try to make ourselves feel more substantial and real in the world by creating as solid an identity and sense of self as we can. *I'm real - I exist - I always will.*

When someone close to us dies, it's a frightening realisation of the *impermanence* of our existence. This realisation is shocking and I believe we do become very afraid. Fear can do different things to people, but mostly we try to use our *mind* to deal with the fear.

Instead of seeing the fearful thoughts, feelings and sensations as *mental events*, we become *Fused* with them and carried away by them so that we feel we have truly become our fear - it seems so real. We *Evaluate* to try to figure out all the details of what's happened. By blocking off and denying things, we try to *Avoid* the worst aspects of our memories and worries for the future. And we try to come up with *Reasons* to explain why this terrible thing should have happened. *It all spells FEAR* - which we feel we must deal with at all costs.

And then *as well as viewing the world through the self-reflecting lense we already use*, a not so funny thing happens - *we start to view the world through the reflecting lense of the person we lost.* Everything is seen in relation to our loved-one. Annabel would have liked this, what would Annabel have thought, what would she do in this situation, which way would she go.....? *The net result is that we're totally unable to live any more - either for ourselves or for others* - because we're so wrapped up and carried away with stuff that has already happened or is in the future, that we're unable to live in the present moment here and now. *We need to let go of our sense of self in order to truly be aware of and re-connect with ourselves and others in the present moment.*



## *Changing and Transforming*

*What happens when a person dies?* This can be one of the greatest and most troubling difficult issues that plague many of us in life, even before and after we experience losing a loved one. *At a time of great personal crisis, many people seek the refuge of religious faith, or they place their belief and trust in a higher power, or the certainty of life after death.* They may be fortunate indeed if they belong to such a movement, because not only can they sustain themselves through their belief, they also have their fellow believers and leaders alongside them who can provide lots of support and succour during painful times. Unfortunately - or as a matter of fact - I don't have a faith myself and *Mindfulness is not a religion* either. It doesn't conflict with or seek to supplant anyone's religious beliefs, and can be used by anyone. It provides me with a lot of *ideas to explore regarding the meaning of life.* One Mindful idea that I've found helpful during these difficult times proposes that life is in a constant process of change. I guess you knew that already, but everything, if you think about it - the chair I'm sitting on, the computer I'm using to write this book, everyone, the planet and the whole cosmos, *is changing and transforming*, even as I type these words. *In fact you and I are not the same now as we were a moment ago.*

I'm not here to tell you what to believe, but just to say here's an idea I got from Mindfulness which I find personally helpful.

*Everything is in a constant state of change and transformation. If so, even when we die, we transform into other particles and processes of life - so in that sense we don't die.*

It's in our nature to be born, grow old, get sick and die - and some of us die much sooner. *But in Mindfulness, there are no beginnings and endings because everything already is just as it is, and it's constantly transforming.*

I take great comfort from this idea - and although I have lost the actual physical presence of someone I love, I really knew her and she's in my mind and other people's minds and she's connected to all of us and everything in the cosmos. *Just the same as you and me.*

*So in reality, there is no loss, only transformation.*



## Time

*There's no time like the present moment.*

Who said that? They could have been studying Mindfulness.

*When you lose a loved one, time does strange things.*

**Time stands still.** You're constantly stuck and being hit in the moment of impact – when you first knew of the death.

**Time goes backwards.** You want to visit and stay in the past where it's safe and nothing very bad has happened and you can relive good times.

**Time goes forwards.** You're drawn to the future where all is unknown, but at least you can create a future where perhaps things can be better again – or sadly, often we're drawn to imagine an even worse future.

*According to Mindfulness, time is an illusion.*

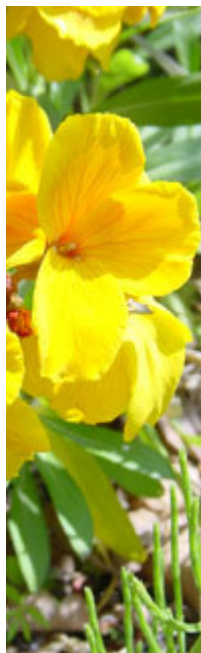
*If this is true, then nothing really ever happens in the past, and nothing will really ever happen in the future.*

*It's all happens right here and now in this present moment.*

Therefore, each moment is a fresh opportunity to be aware of what's really happening.

**What's really happening is a very busy, very imaginative and very creative mind.** You can't stop your mind or switch it off - my job would be a whole lot easier if I could teach people how to do that - but I can't. **All you can do is try to learn how you create the illusion of time, and how time can come to dominate and destroy you.**

*If you don't want to become trapped in a past and future time-warp, practice being Mindful of the illusion of time, here and now in this present moment.*



### *Concluding the Journey*

Thanks for travelling with me. I may not have been the most cheerful companion, *but at least you stayed with me and I really appreciate that.*

Through Mindfulness I'm trying to be *less judging, more patient, more open to the possibility of fresh beginnings, more trusting, less striving, more acceptant and more able to let go of my attachments to the past, and the future.* I've a long way to go, there are many difficulties ahead, and it's all so painful to come to terms with.

In Bella's Way, I've given you a glimpse of what it's like for me in tragic circumstances, to turn towards and accept fears and anguish, and to try to face up to some very difficult issues.

*Mindfulness is helping me, and I hope you can see how it might also help others to cope with loss, and to learn to accept some of the many other challenges of life.*

*Why not learn to be more Mindful of all the moments we have - just as they are?*

### Are We Nearly There Yet?

It's natural to want to reach a destination, and on family trips my kids always used to say, "*Are we nearly there yet?*"

*What if there is no destination? What if we've already arrived? What if the journey is the destination? What if the journey never ends because there is no journey?*

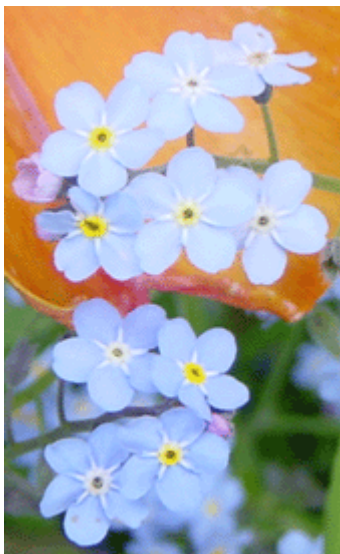
All too deep and philosophical..... maybe, but whether we have a faith, belief, religion or none - by being Mindful we can make life the best it can be, in all the moments we have.

*And here we are at the end of the book - but this is not an ending.*

*The story can never be written and finished - only lived by all.*

*And now for the final important reason for writing the book - please will you make a donation to one or more epilepsy organisation? As you'll see on the following pages, I've made it very easy for you!*

*Thank you for reading Bella's Way.*



### ***Donations Made Easy***

To encourage you to make a donation to one or more epilepsy organisation, ***I've researched and chosen some in the UK, Europe, North and South America.***

Over the next few pages, I have made making a donation easy by:-

- ***Saying briefly what some of the organisations stand for***
- ***Providing a link to each website***
- ***Providing a direct link to some 'making a donation' pages***

***All you need is your credit card, a willingness and firm intention to give, and 5 minutes of your time.*** For me, this is one of the most exciting parts of this project, because through reading Bella's Way you will be making a real and tangible contribution to the lives of many people living with epilepsy, and also helping others through difficult times.

***Thank you again!!***

### **Donating to Epilepsy Organisations in the UK**

The organisations listed below, represent a small selection of those working in the field of epilepsy in the UK. A more complete list can be found at the Epilepsy Action website under [links](#).

#### **Epilepsy Action**

Epilepsy Action is the largest member-led epilepsy organisation in Britain, acting as the voice for the UK's estimated 440,000 people with epilepsy. [Donate](#)

#### **National Society for Epilepsy**

The largest medical charity in the field of epilepsy in the UK. [Donate](#)

#### **National Centre for Young People With Epilepsy**

The major provider of specialist services for young people with epilepsy in the UK. [Donate](#)

#### **Support Dogs Online**

Support Dogs is an innovative Charity which trains Seizure Alert Dogs® for people with epilepsy and Disability Assistance Dogs for people with physical disabilities. [Donate](#)

#### **Epilepsy Bereaved**

Works towards the prevention of deaths from epilepsy through raising awareness and promoting research, and provides information and support to people bereaved by epilepsy. [Donate](#)

#### **National Epilepsy Research Foundation**

Established with the aim of funding research into the causes, treatment and prevention of epilepsy. [Donate](#)

The organisations listed on these 2 pages are all members of the **Joint Epilepsy Council of the UK and Ireland** (JEC), an umbrella body that exists to enable organisations in the UK and Ireland to work together for the benefit of people with epilepsy.

***Donating to Epilepsy Organisations in Europe***

[Dansk Epilepsiforening \*Denmark\*](#)

[DeutscheEpilepsieVereinigung \*Germany\*](#)

[AISPACE \*France\*](#)

[Svenska Epilepsiförbundet \*Sweden\*](#)

[Epilepsialiitto \*Finland\*](#)

[Epi-Suisse \*Switzerland\*](#)

[Liga Portuguesa Contra a Epilepsia \*Portugal\*](#)

[Spolecnost 'E' \*Czech Republic\*](#)

[Caritas Malta Epilepsy Association \*Malta\*](#)

[Associazione Italiano contro l'Epilessia \*Italy\*](#)

[Asociatia Nationala a Bolnavilor de Epilepsie \*Romania\*](#)

[EpilepsieDachverbandÖsterreich \*Austria\*](#)

[NorskEpilepsiforbund \*Norway\*](#)

***Donating to Epilepsy Organisations in North & South America***

[\*\*Epilepsy Foundation USA\*\*](#)

[\*\*Epilepsy Canada\*\*](#)

[\*\*Associacao Brasileira de Epilepsia \*Brasil\*\*\*](#)

[\*\*Liga Chilena contra la Epilepsia \*Chile\*\*\*](#)



## **Acknowledgements**

*Bella's Way would not have existed if my daughter had not died, and I wish with all my heart that this book had never been written.* But there it is, another event passing by, peacefully into the past..... that I hold dear in this present moment.

### ***To Annabel whom I know is with me every step of the way***

She'd think it was really cool that because of her and her Dad, people might donate lots of money to epilepsy organisations - especially if some went to the Support Dogs Charity - she so loved animals.

### ***To Christina whose pain I share every day and can never really know or experience as she does***

I'm truly sorry that I'm not always quick enough to be Mindful. Thanks for still being there when I am, and thanks for our love of each other, Bella and Sally.

### ***To Sally whose pain I would do anything to take away if I could***

We're here with you Sas - here and now - right at this moment.

### ***To all my family and friends who have seen and shared in our suffering too***

These connections, these common bonds.

### ***To all teachers of Mindfulness***

Thank you. I have a strong intention in my heart to learn.

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### ***Booklist , Further Resources & Feedback***

***Coming to Our Senses*** Jon Kabat-Zinn 2005 Piatkus ISBN 0749925884

***Wherever You Go There You Are*** Jon Kabat-Zinn 1994 Hyperion ISBN 7 868 80708

***Full Catastrophe Living*** Jon Kabat-Zinn 1990 Delta ISBN 3 853 03122

***Heal Thy Self*** Saki Santoreli 1999 Bell Tower ISBN 6 098 05045

***Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy for Depression*** Segal, Williams, & Teasdale 2002 Guilford Press ISBN 1 572 30706 4

***Practising the Power of Now*** Eckhart Tolle 2002 Hodder and Stoughton ISBN 0 340 82253 8

***Stillness Speaks*** Eckhart Tolle 2003 Hodder and Stoughton ISBN 0 340 82874 5

***Buddhist Psychology*** Caroline Brazier 2003 Robinson ISBN 1 84119 733 5

***Acceptance and Commitment Therapy*** Steven Hayes 1999 Guilford Press ISBN 1 57230 955 5

***Taming the Tiger Within*** Thich Nhat Hanh 2004 Riverhead Books ISBN 1 57322 288 7

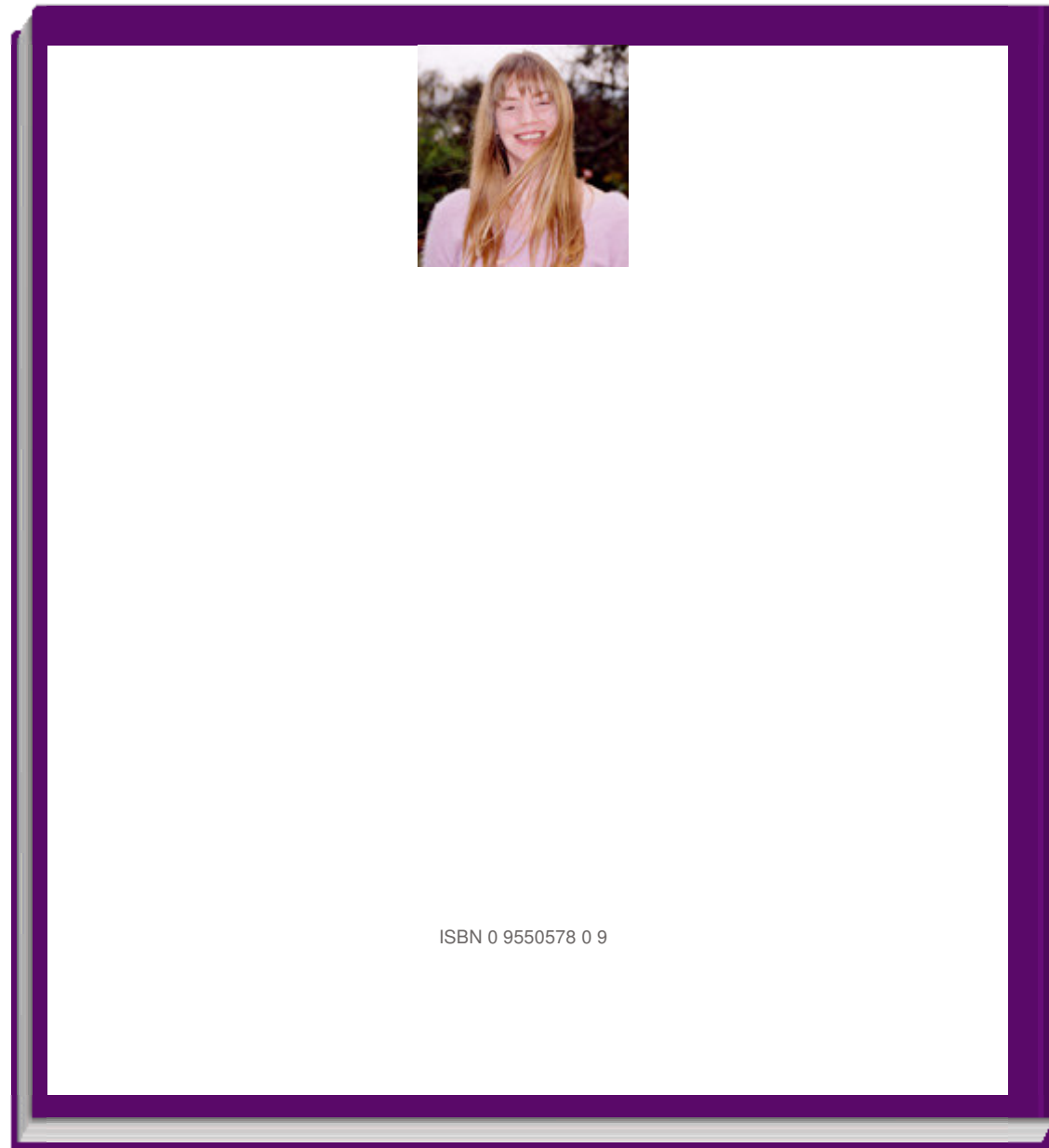
***The River and the Clouds*** Story by Thich Nhat Hanh

***Tapes and CD's for Mindfulness Practice*** North Wales Centre for Mindfulness Research and Practice

***Mindfulness Meditation Practice with Jon Kabat-Zinn***  
<http://www.mindfulnessstapes.com/index.html>

***The Art of Mindful Living*** Thich Nhat Hanh Sounds True (Audio CD) - February 24, 2003

~ ***Feedback*** ~ If you'd like to tell me your response to the book, you can send your comments via [Feedback](#) on the Bella's Way website.



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