

# Report on the Impact of (Mindfulness based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) Programmes for Coram Adoptive Parents in 2022

## 1. The life-long challenges of adoption

Post adoption work and research over the years has revealed the impact of adoption on those who undertake this crucial role in society. For some, there is joy and fulfilment but for a very substantial number, the path is demanding and at times fraught. The prevalence of adopter depression and anxiety, overlaid by feelings of guilt for perceived inadequacies in parenting, can be high and there is often a correlation between poor adopter or carer mental health and children's challenging behaviour. A major report on adoption disruption in the UK found depression prevalence of 43% in the sample of adoptive parents dealing with challenging children at home, compared to 13% in its 'general population' sample ([Selwyn et al, 2014](#)).

A complex model of adoptive parenting stress has been offered by [Glossop \(2013\)](#) in his doctoral thesis exploring the role of mindfulness and self-compassion in relation to parenting stress in adoptive parents. He cites additional factors contributing to **adopter stress** which include:

- Parents' mental health
- Low levels of trait mindfulness and self-compassion
- Poor parent-child attachments
- Adopters' own attachment history
- Behavioural problems of child
- Generally inadequate therapeutic support

The psychological 'fall out' for all parties is long lasting and there are heavy associated economic implications in terms of therapeutic costs and the aftermath of disrupted placements.

We know, however, that the causes of stress and depression are complex and all will have implications for parenting. The question this suggests is: what form of intervention can best support and build resilience in a diverse population of adoptive parents whose experience of stress at the time of the intervention arises from a combination of factors which may or may not include the specific challenges of parenting children with histories of neglect and abuse.

## 2. Why a mindfulness group training for adoptive parents?

Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) for Adoptive Parents is an exciting and innovative project. Initial trials of the programme were part-funded by the Oxford Mindfulness Centre in 2018. Our bespoke course for adopters is an adapted version of an

[evidence-based N.H.S](#) programme used to treat recurrent depression and stress. In 2-hour sessions over 8 weeks, participants are taught mindfulness practices and offered new ways of understanding stress, low mood and depression. They are asked to commit to regular mindfulness practice between sessions.

Generally, parents who experience wellbeing and feel well-resourced will be better equipped to deal with their children. We believe that adoptive parents experience all the usual challenges of other parents – worry about jobs, income, health, supporting elderly relatives etc in addition to caring for children who have suffered neglect or abuse in the past. Our focus in MBCT is, therefore, on the ‘whole person’, whatever the sources of their stress and difficulty rather than parenting as such. We believe this approach is non stigmatising, liberating and addresses the reality that things, including family life and stressors are always in a state of flux.

In the light of the evidence, our hypothesis was that this adapted MBCT curriculum had a high likelihood of improving adopters’ wellbeing, reducing stress and rates of depression whatever the causes of those challenges. We were also interested in the extent to which improved parental mental health may have additional benefits including helping these parents to mindfully engage with other therapeutic interventions thereby reducing risk of placement breakdown, following feedback from adoptive parents who completed our initial training in Bristol in 2018: *‘I am more patient and able to apply the techniques I have learnt in P.A.C.E, N.V.R techniques (adoptive parent, 2018)*. Improvements in self-compassion are also of interest to this population as a study has found that children of mindfully self-compassionate parents tend to have lower rates of anxiety and depression with improved capacity for emotional regulation (Parent, J, 2016).

In addition to existing research in relation to MBCT, we were alert in our courses to indicators of ‘parental burnout’ characterized by Roskam et al as: 1) an overwhelming exhaustion related to one’s parental role, 2) emotional distancing from one’s children, and 3) a sense of parental ineffectiveness. Whilst some of these conditions were occasionally in evidence, we were not presented with consistent or strong signs of the distancing phenomena which places children directly at risk of harm. We did notice, however, the overlap between the issue of Roskam’s concept of ‘perceived ineffectiveness’ and Banduras’ work in relation to ‘self-efficacy’. Comments made during the session and in our evaluation led us to feel this was the more fruitful area for further exploration. We speculate that ‘self-efficacy’ (defined as ‘a steady belief in one’s capacity to meet the demands of parenting and that one has ready access to strategies and tools that optimise the benefits of the good times and are supportive in responding to the challenging times’) may be an under-investigated and crucial aspect of placement stability.

## **2. What does this intervention achieve?**

In the spring and summer of 2022 ‘Caring For Me, Caring For You’ MBCT for adoptive parents was taught by two instructors (one with extensive professional experience of adoption and one with experience of delivering therapy in clinical contexts) to two groups of Coram adopters over 8 weeks, live, on-line.

With some exceptions, the following explicit and implicit themes were in evidence across both groups:

- Hyper vigilance/future gazing - anticipating and attempting to deal with or fix problems before they arise
- Guilt in not being meeting high standards as parent or the toll of trying to meet these standards – increased risk of burnout.
- Global loss of pleasure - even when pleasurable things are possible -
- A sense of surviving rather than thriving
- Loss of confidence
- Lack of control
- Life ‘contracting’ and loss of aspects of former – pre-adoption - life
- Isolation – a sense of cut off from others/ inhabiting a different parenting world
- Self-compassion as a novel and problematic concept

### ***3: Outcome Measures and Reported Impact***

We collected simple pre and post quantitative measures (measuring wellbeing, self-compassion and mindfulness) along with subjective feedback from each group (see Appendix 1 & 2 for subjective comments, voices of the parents). In addition to this was the positive and appreciative feedback that arose in 1:1 support and in the halfway review. We note that two of those unable to complete the course also offered positive feedback.

#### **3.1) Attendance: Number of Parents attending ‘Caring for Me, Caring for You’ (8 - weekly sessions of 2 hours.)**

- Course 1: 13 Parents enrolled (12 female, 1 male).
- Course 2: 16 Parents enrolled (12 female, 4 male)

#### **3.2) Acceptability: Attendance and completion rates indicate MBCT as an intervention appears to be acceptable**

- Course 1: On average 93% of parents attended each week and 100% completed.
- Course 2: On average 83% of parents attended each week and 83% completed.

#### **3.3) When asked 100% of parents in both courses would recommend MBCT to other adopters.**

#### **3.4) Impact- Clinical Improvements**

Simple baseline and final outcome levels of [Wellbeing](#), [Self-compassion](#) and [Mindfulness](#) with valid data (ie completion of questionnaires pre and post course) are shown below. Outcomes have been combined over across both groups to show mean impact. Individual data sets for course 1 and course 2 are available on request.

3.5) **Wellbeing** - ‘the ability to enjoy aspects of daily life, linked to increase in pleasure, satisfaction in life and self-care’. [The Warwick Wellbeing Scale](#) (WB) was used to measure wellbeing. 51 is indicated as average of the general population (the top 15% of scores range from 60-70 and the bottom 15% 14-42). A 3–8-point increase from pre-post indicates a ‘meaningful positive change’.

Adopters Mean Pre-course WB rating: 41	Adopter Mean Post course WB rating: 55	Mean point increase: 9.5
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1 parent showed a deterioration of wellbeing by a score of 3 (family issues were cited).

3.6) **Self-compassion** (SC) ie ‘the ability to recognise distress and instead of judge and criticise take the approach of *how can I comfort and care for myself in this moment?*’ It is worth noting that higher levels of SC are linked to lower levels of stress and burnout ([Neff, 2003](#)). The Neff, 2003 short form self-compassion scale was used. As a rough guide average scores (SC) across the population are around 3.0, a score of 1-2.5 indicates low self-compassion, 2.5-3.5 indicates moderate, and 3.5-5.0 is an indication of high self-compassion

<b>Adopters Mean Pre-course SC rating: 3.2 (indicating moderate SC)</b>	<b>Adopters Mean Post course SC rating: 3.8(indicating high SC)</b>
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3.7) Mindfulness, it is worth noting that higher levels of mindfulness tend to be associated with higher levels of efficacy in role/life and positive affect, an area which parents reported to be consistently low/lacking during pre-course interviews and discussion in session. We used the [Brown, 2003- Mindful Awareness Scale](#) (MAASs): Average scores of mindfulness across the population are approximately 3.85.

<b>Adopters Mean Pre-course MAAS rating: 2.8</b>	<b>Adopters Mean Post course MAAS: 3.7</b>
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Additionally self-reports of impact (see appendix 2) indicate **increased willingness to see self-care as essential to parenting and resilience** rather than an indication of selfishness or indulgence.

- **Improved quality of relationships with family and significant others.**
- **Higher perceived rates of self-efficacy to manage stress and challenge.**

**3.8) Voices of the Parents: Please see appendix 2 to read full report on parent's experience. A small sample of comments are listed below:**

**Impact of MBCT on well-being:**

- ✓ The course has helped me be kinder to myself and I now am more able to notice negative feelings about myself and be curious about rather than ruminate on these. It has encouraged me to take time for activities that nurture me and helped me be more present as a parent.
- ✓ The course has really changed my self-acceptance and kindness towards myself. As a busy mum, I had found it very difficult to prioritise my well-being and the course has enabled me to take a step back, slow down and enjoy more of my everyday experiences. As a result, I have found I have more space and time to attend to the things that are most important to me (eg my relationships with my children and husband).
- ✓ Helped me to stop myself dysregulating so often. Allowed me some me time.
- ✓ I am calmer, more tolerant and feel more positive.
- ✓ It's taken me until week 7 for it to click and since the seventh session I have put things in place that have helped me hugely. Without the course I wouldn't have known I needed to do those things or how to do it.

**Impact of MBCT on physical health**

- ✓ I am eating more mindfully which I think has reduced my tendency to binge.
- ✓ I have chronic pain and I have noticed that attending to the pain in a kind and mindful way has increased my acceptance of it and I am less frustrated by it. So, the course has certainly supported me to manage my pain in a more positive way.
- ✓ Less tense and sleeping better.

- ✓ I do feel my head is clearer and I feel calmer
- ✓ Less heart racing when stressed.

### **Impact of MBCT on self-efficacy**

- ✓ I think the course and weekly practise have started to embed self care within my daily routine. I feel confident to build on this moving forward and am hoping the follow up sessions will help me stay on track!
- ✓ The course has really changed how I think of challenging situations. I don't always react the way I would like to, but I can look at the situation and accept it for what it is which is a good start as it saves a lot of energy that used to be spent denying any issue existed.
- ✓ I realise the importance of spending time looking after myself and am working on not feeling guilty about this. Having a toolbox to hand is great to manage stress in different circumstances.
- ✓ My partner has previously attended the mindfulness course. We have a shared understanding of mindfulness and the range of tools and practices available for us to use. We have completed some of the practices together and plan to do so in the future (e.g. body scan). The great thing is we will be able to encourage other and offer suggestions of tools to use when we are having a good day or a bad day (e.g. noticing things and being kind to ourselves / appreciative / thankful)
- ✓ It has improved my self-compassion and it has provided me with a resource I can practice but also tap into in times of need which has made me feel more confident in dealing with the stresses and strains of life.

### **Impact of MBCT on relationships**

- ✓ It has made them more positive.
- ✓ More connected

- ✓ Handing over some of my responsibility and therefore giving my partner more confidence with our children
- ✓ My relationship with my family has improved as I am less stressed with them, myself and situations
- ✓ I'm a more present parent. I'm more patient with my daughter.
- ✓ Better able to express my feelings when I'm upset
- ✓ More patience with my son when feeling frustrated, being able to come back quicker to a level head when using 3 minute breathing spaced

Added to this was the appreciation of the safe non-judgmental group where adoption was understood. Participants in Course 2 participated in a WhatsApp group for support and encouragement. The courses proved to be both acceptable and acceptable to parents in the online format and genuine relationships and personal connections between people who had never met each other grew over the 8 weeks.

## 4. Theoretical and operational considerations

### 4.1 Curriculum choice

The MBCT based programme, when taught to a population with shared characteristics, will naturally include content and reflect the concerns of that population. As we have not compared outcomes for MBCT and specifically mindful parenting curriculums such as Bogels (Bögels & Restifo, 2014) in our courses for adoptive parents, we cannot compare the two or report on the impact of the latter. Our choice of curriculum was based on our sense that it was important to acknowledge the specific needs of adoptive parents for safety and understanding but within a framework that did not reinforce the suggestion that the challenges they were facing - or would face - were all concerned with their parenting role. This approach enabled us to include in the training parents with children in placement but at different points along the adoption journey and those who were experiencing a range of challenges unrelated, but highly relevant to their parenting.

### 4.2 The discrepancy between family life 'as it is' and family life as hoped for

The majority of adoptive parents in our groups - however long the adoption - were vulnerable to a style of thinking that involved monitoring the gap between how things were and how things were supposed to be. Such thinking holds risks to mental health and mental wellbeing. Expectations are extensively explored in pre-adoption assessments, but our courses demonstrate that this 'discrepancy- based' monitoring, being a natural psychological tendency to which the adopters attention has not been drawn, can continue

into the adoption with significant risks for placement stability. MBCT is a powerful intervention in revealing and actively working with this tendency.

#### *4.3 Self-compassion – kindness to self*

Perhaps the most noteworthy aspect of these two courses is the extent to which self-care and self-compassion are not understood or allowed a status in the hierarchy of parental concerns. Given the relationship between self-compassion and attuned parenting, this is a serious finding. Advising these parents to take care of themselves is not enough: these are essential but learnable skills that, we suggest, have been overlooked in, what to the prospective parent (if not the social workers), is a goal orientated approval process and a subsequent child focus that eclipses their own needs. We accept that the approval process cannot incorporate the teaching of these skills, but the training and home studies could - and should - include a more nuanced discussion of these key skills and the importance of acquiring them.

#### *4.4 Self efficacy*

We did not have pre and post measures for self-efficacy, but note the evaluative ratings and comments reflecting satisfaction and pleasure at having access to a 'tool box' of skills and practices to use in the future. We also note that the comments suggest that the learning is viewed as helpful for a wider range of stresses than parenting alone. Given that self-efficacy affects adopter's appraisals of their capacity for meeting challenges in the present and in the future, child related or not, we remain very interested in this dimension. Given that it may be more significant in placement stability than has been recognised hitherto, our future work will seek to find pre and post measures for looking at this in greater depth.

#### *4.5 Support of participants*

In addition to the pre-course calls, the two courses involved high levels of between-session support and communication: both 1:1 and across the group. In course 2, one particularly vulnerable participant had 6 extended 1:1 calls to ensure his safe engagement with the programme. Personal 1:1 reviews were offered to the entire group at the half way stage. 10 people availed themselves of this offer.

This level of connection and communication supported confidence and trust in the process and ourselves as teachers. It also enabled us to talk at length with 2 people who withdrew during the course. We believe these connections increase the likelihood of people persevering with the sessions and the home practice but are aware that the current costing of the courses in no way covers the time of two trainers - which given the complexity of the populations is highly desirable - and this level of activity outside the sessions. Whilst this is a group programme and for this reason a low-cost intervention, it may be that we need to be pricing the programme more in line with conventional psycho therapies if we are to continue to achieve the outcomes demonstrated in the Appendix.

#### *4.6 Early placements*

It is noteworthy that 2 out of the 3 parents who withdrew from the course were in the early stages of placement. Whilst the experiences they described were challenging and the possible value of the course clear – including the attractiveness of learning these skills early on, committing to an 8-week programme with home practice turned out to be impractical albeit for different reasons. This would not stop us offering places to new parents, but we will be more informed and cautious regarding the conflicts this inevitably creates.

### **Conclusion**

Bringing this population of parents together in an atmosphere of safety and non-judgment has proved to be a powerful and moving experience. The curriculum allows for levels of conversation, disclosure, discovery, and support that we believe are unique in post adoption support.

Our findings suggest that our focus on these parents in their own right and in a holistic sense is an unstigmatising and efficacious approach fostering self-care and resilience and appreciation of aspects of life, including their children, hitherto unnoticed in the busyness and stress of daily life. The MBCT informed curriculum, enhanced by practices in self compassion and appreciation, appears to be a highly appropriate and cost affective intervention for this group. In an online format it has proved both accessible and acceptable and one, we believe, that should be available to all adopters with children in placement.

Jacky Slade and Emma Thom

Date 25/08/22

## Appendix 1 Key references

- Glossop, A. (2013). What is the relationship between parenting stress, mindfulness and self-compassion in adoptive parents? Oxford Doctoral Course in Clinical Psychology. Retrieved on 20/11/16 from <http://www.adoptionplus.co.uk/userassets/docs/Abstract-Mindfulness-and-Adoption.pdf>
- National Institute for Clinical Excellence (2004). *Depression: Management in primary and secondary care*.
- Neff, K. D. (2003). Development and validation of a scale to measure self-compassion. *Self and Identity*, 2, 223-250.
- Parent J, McKee LG, N Rough J, Forehand R. The Association of Parent Mindfulness with Parenting and Youth Psychopathology Across Three Developmental Stages. *J Abnorm Child Psychol*. 2016 Jan;44(1):191-202. doi: 10.1007/s10802-015-9978-x. PMID: 25633828; PMCID: PMC4520790
- Selwyn, J., Wijedasa, D., and Meakings, S. (2014). *Beyond the Adoption Order: challenges, interventions and adoption disruption*. London:Department for Education

## Appendix 2. Feedback from 2 'course non-completers'

### 1. Single parent and early adopter

Thanks again for the conversation earlier this week, I appreciate the supportive way in which we were able to communicate.

Firstly, I'm grateful for the investment and that the sessions have already helped me feel more able to notice things and slow things down a bit.

They've also helped me to make helpful decisions about taking further time away from work to process and reflect on what is my new parenthood.

Lastly, they've helped us use our senses as a family to change pace in our day.

It has been difficult as a single adopter with a pre-schooler to engage full heartedly in the sessions with the busyness of life.

So, for now, I'm grateful for these attachments below and I won't attend any further sessions for now, but I'd like to know about any future sessions please.

### 2. Early adopter

Dear Emma and Jacky, I hope you are both well?

So sorry to do this but I am stepping away from the course.

We are away next week on hols, and with the train strikes, we have decided to start our travels tomorrow night so would be missing the next two.

With being back in work now, and trying to juggle everything (nearly successfully!) I am finding myself under some pressure to spend the time in the right areas. To be honest, the weeks are quite full on and right at this moment, I would rather I connected with Joe over dinner together and support him starting his day with Paige on the Friday. Everything is good - just want to remove some of the time we are like ships in the night!

I am really grateful for the time spent on it and the practice with you in the sessions and outside of these. You are both so kind and gifted at guiding us. I will miss it.

### Appendix 3 Questionnaire Responses

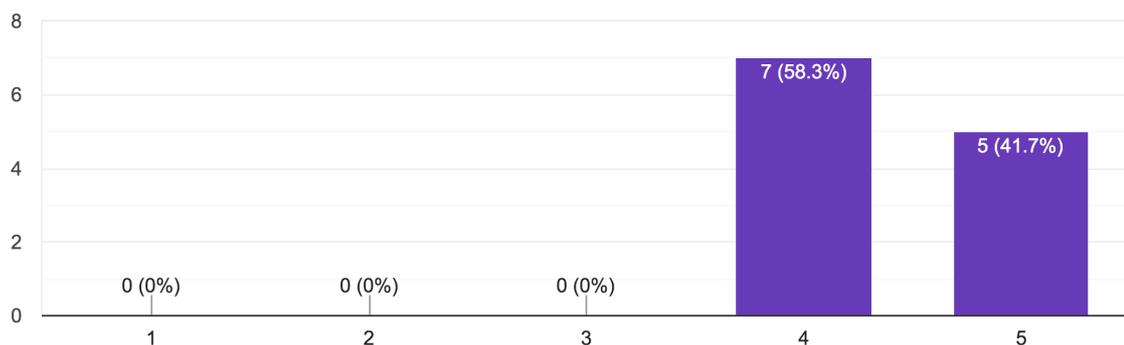
#### Feedback from Course 1 Jan – March 2022

- Enquiries: 23
- No commencing course: 13
- Completion rate: 100%
- Attendance: 93%

#### Jan – March 2022 Group

1) Please indicate on a scale of 1 (low) - 5 (high) please how much you valued the course

12 responses



**2. Could you say what impact, if any, the course has had on your wellbeing (e.g. overall mood, self-acceptance, kindness, capacity to notice/enjoy aspects of everyday life)12 responses**

- It helped me be kinder to myself and calm down
- The course has really changed my self acceptance and kindness towards myself. As a busy mum, I had found it very difficult to prioritise my well-being and the course has enabled me to take a step back, slow down and enjoy more of my everyday experiences. As a result I have found I have more space and time to attend to the

things that are most important to me (eg my relationships with my children and husband).

- It's taken me until week 7 for it to click and since the seventh session I have put things in place that have helped me hugely. Without the course I wouldn't have known I needed to do those things or how to do it.
- I am calmer, more tolerant and feel more positive.
- Given me time to think about how I function. Helped me to stop myself disregulating so often. Allowed me some me time.
- Starting to understand the importance of all the above but still working on achieving them, but being aware is a good step.
- It has improved my self compassion and it has provided me with a resource I can practice but also tap into in times of need which has made me feel more confident in dealing with the stresses and strains of life.
- No change

**3. Can you say what impact the course has had, if any, on your physical health? (e.g sleep, aches and pain, condition management, headaches)12 responses**

- I do feel my head is clearer and I feel calmer
- I have chronic pain and I have noticed that attending to the pain in a kind and mindful way has increased my acceptance of it and I am less frustrated by it. So, the course has certainly supported me to manage my pain in a more positive way.
- I haven't noticed any difference yet but I think with time that will change as I've started to do an 11 minute morning yoga stretch session every day.
- Less tense and sleeping better.
- None needed.
- n/a
- It's been a difficult time for us, so it is hard to say regarding sleep. But I have had less aches and pains.
- No change
- calmer at moments
- Less heart racing when stressed.
- I am eating more mindfully which I think has reduced my tendency to binge.
- None

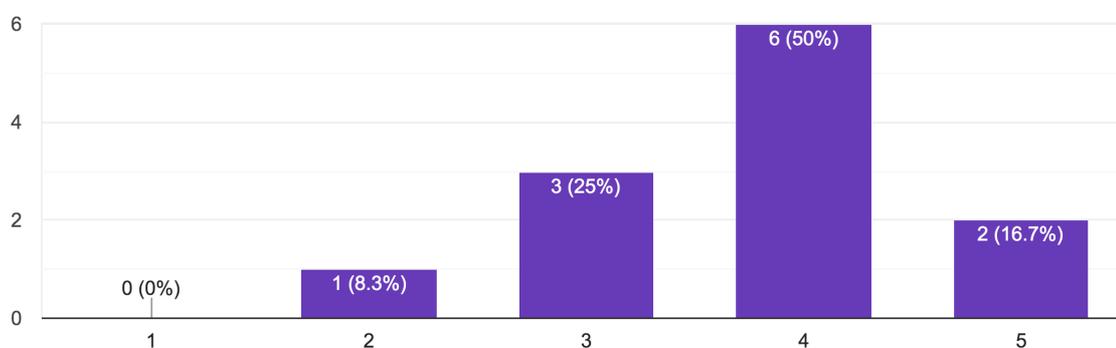
#### 4) Can you say what impact, if any, the course has had on your relationships?<sup>12</sup>

##### responses

- I think my relationship with my daughter has been calmer and I'm spending more time with friends.
- I have found myself with more energy to engage positively with my family and friends. Being more tuned in to my thoughts, feelings and body sensations has meant I am able to articulate my inner state more effectively to others.
- It's made me calmer and not as reactive. I think before I speak more. I ask myself if I really need to get wound up and it stops me from feeling like that.
- Improved relationships with wife, children and colleagues.
- Helped me to keep calmer - especially with my daughter.
- More patience with my son when feeling frustrated, being able to come back quicker to a level head when using 3 minute breathing space.
- Hard to say as it has been a rough time.
- No change
- finding myself more understanding and reaching out more
- Better able to express my feelings when I'm upset
- I'm a more present parent. I'm more patient with my daughter.
- Helped me realise I need some more of them!

#### 5) Self-care and self-compassion are linked with well-being and resilience. To what extent do you feel more confident about investing in your own well-being in the face of other demands?

12 responses

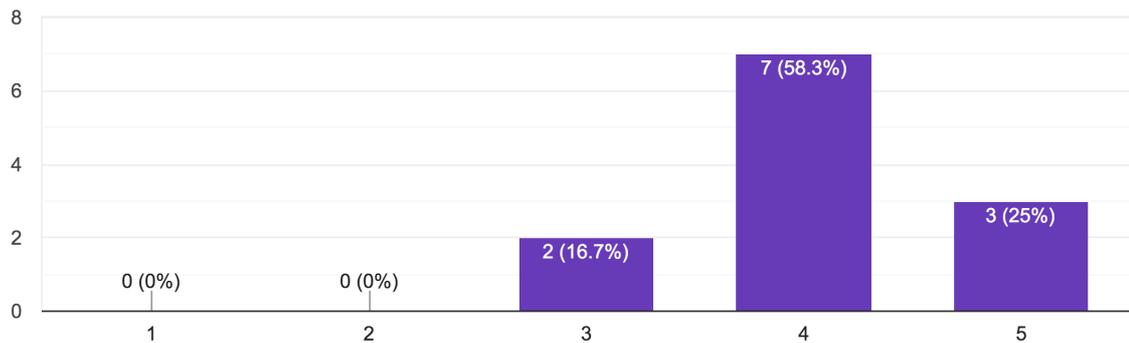


0= NOT AT ALL 5= VERY CONFIDENT

0= NOT AT ALL 5= VERY CONFIDENT

6) How confident are you that your mindfulness toolbox and attitudes (such as curiosity, kindness and non-judgement) will support you to manage stress?

12 responses



0= NOT AT ALL 5- VERY CONFIDENT

**7) Can you say any more about your answers to Q5 and Q 6? (maybe examples)10**

**responses**

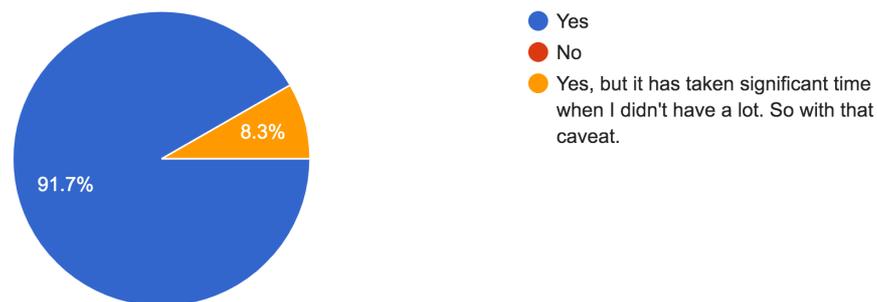
- I think that I can say I'm doing my best and that's ok.
- I think the course and weekly practise have started to embed self care within my daily routine. I feel confident to build on this moving forward and am hoping the follow up sessions will help me stay on track!
- The course has made me realise that I'm important too and I need to make proper time for myself and everybody will survive if I'm not there 24/7.
- I have learnt easy to apply, flexible methods to be mindful and manage acute and chronic stress.
- I see it can work and be really helpful. I am not convinced I will always find time to do it. However it has shifted my thinking about myself a lot.
- I realise the importance of spending time looking after myself and am working on not feeling guilty about this. Having a toolbox to hand is great to manage stress in different circumstances.
- I found it hard to access the last three sessions as my daughter became quite jealous and insecure about me having time away from her even though in practical terms it wasn't much time apart at all. For her it was the idea that I was doing something else.

Whilst I tried to keep up the independent practice, I'll admit I started to feel disheartened about missing out and not as motivated. That said I do feel my self compassion has improved and I am making a conscious effort to carve out more nurturing time for myself.

- need to work more on myself (stop feeling guilty) but already practising has helped with my stress and anxiety
- I am now more likely to care for myself than I was before - more yoga, more time with friends, less guilt about spending time away from children.
- I can now really see the value in being self-compassionate and no longer see it as being self-indulgent.

8) Would you recommend this course to other adoptive parents?

12 responses



**9. Can you tell us what you would say to another adoptive parent considering this course** 12 responses

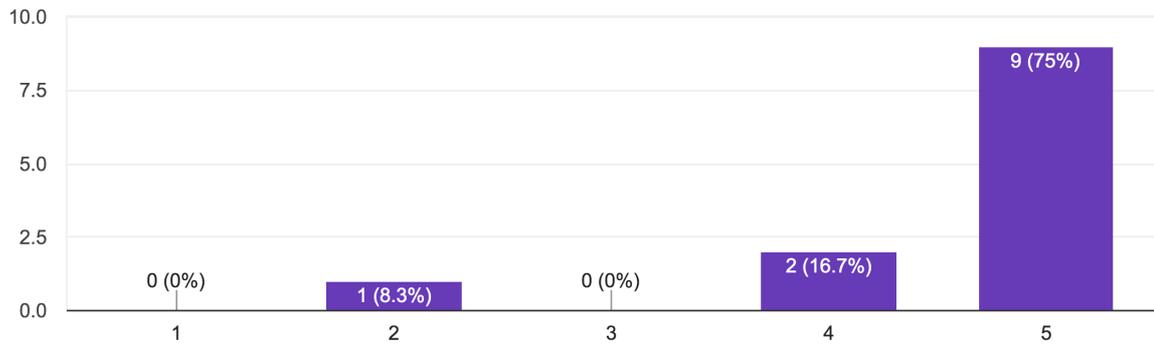
- That it's good to focus on yourself and not your child for a bit.
- This course has been really beneficial in starting to develop my mindfulness, self care and self compassion. It has been complemented by being part of such a supportive group of people who understand the unique challenges and joys of being adoptive parents.
- I would tell them it's definitely worth it and to stick with it, that it might not click straight away and to just go with it and do what they can and not feel pressured in to doing anything until they are ready. I barely did any of the home study because I felt pressured to do it which was the opposite of how I expected and wanted to feel. So I

allowed myself to go at my own pace and that allowed me to have my epiphany on week 7.

- It is the best, most practical and user friendly mindfulness course I have found.
- Its been good - to help me think about myself, to help me calm down, to have a space with kind warm people to focus just on me and how I think, feel, react etc. Have used the practice (or a form of it) a lot.
- Give you strategies to manage stress and get perspective on situations. It can't hurt to try.
- I am glad I did the course as it has given me a resource box, but with hindsight it may have been too much of a commitment so early into our adoption (6months). One reason my daughter n
- I am glad I did the course as it has given me a resource box, but with hindsight it may have been too much of a commitment so early into our adoption (6months). One reason my daughter not feeling secure enough to let me have this time away from her, but also for me struggling to prioritize myself. That said, it is good to have highlighted this as something I need to continue to work on.
- It's worth exploring
- brilliant way to take time out, to learn new tips and techniques, be in a completely non judgemental environment, focus on you as a person (not as a parent, wife etc....)
- Go for it if you feel you have the capacity and time right now, otherwise a adoptive parent support group might be better.
- I would highly recommend it. Lovely group of people with similar lives/experiences brought together to build on tools to make life a bit easier.

10) Please rate the importance to you of this course being exclusively for adoptive parents (as opposed to a public course or a course for parents generally)

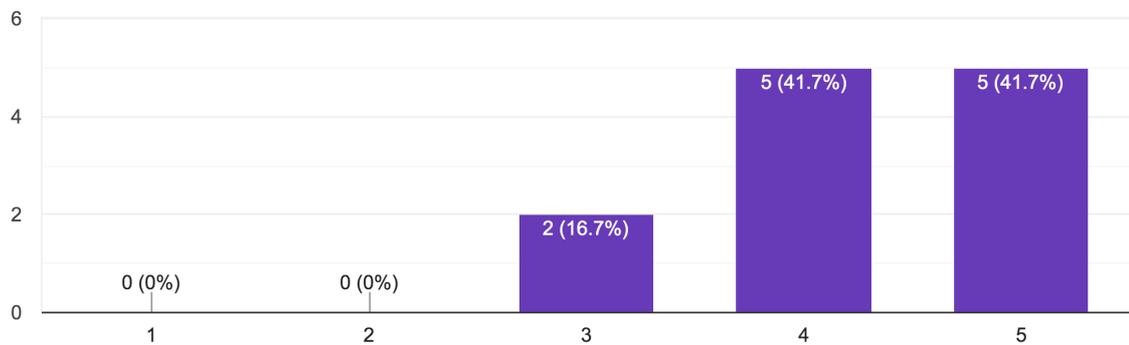
12 responses



0= No importance 5= very important

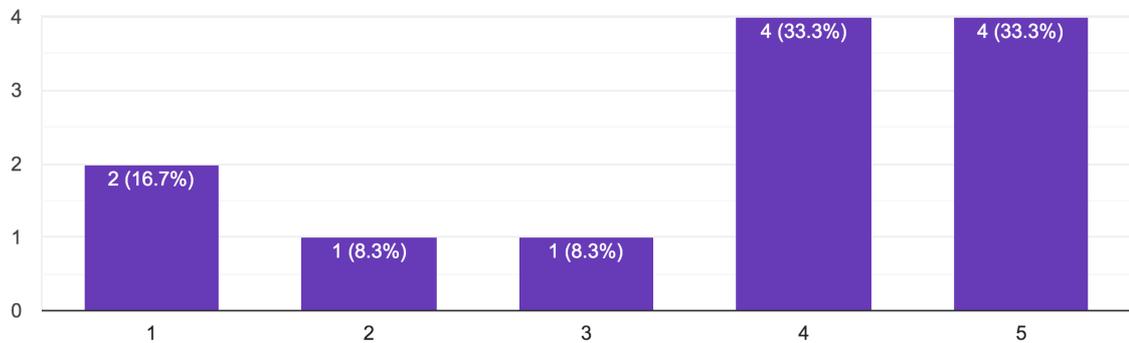
11) Please rate the value of the Handouts

12 responses



12) Please rate the importance to you of the offer of monthly post course "Deepen Your Practice" mindfulness support sessions

12 responses



**0= No importance 5= very important**

**13) Is there anything else you would like to say about your experience with us?**

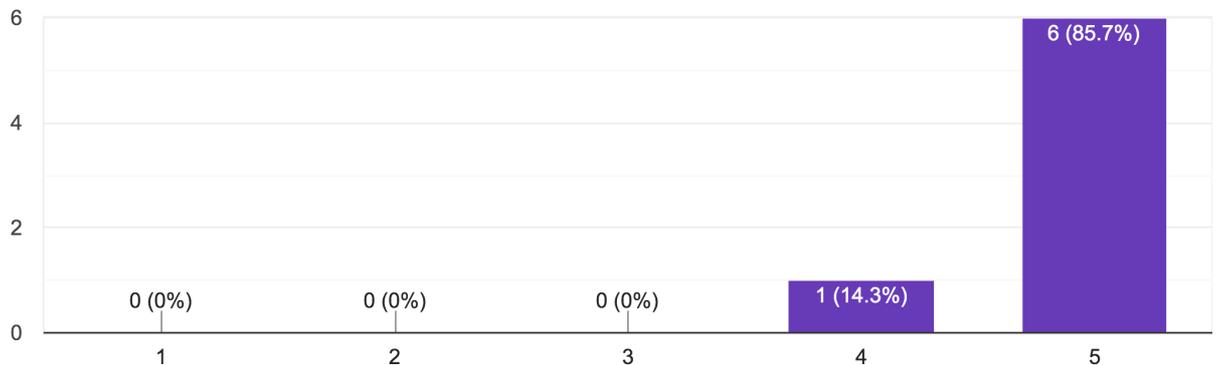
**(teaching/ pre course calls/ support during the course/ suggestions for what would have made it a better experience for you). 12 responses**

- I really enjoyed it and found it useful although I am finding it hard to put the practice in every day
- My whole experience has been really positive. The taster session was very informative and the pre course call and in course support were sensitive and allowed further exploration of issues personal to me. I really appreciated all the support offered by Jacky and Emma.
- Personally I find I need to be doing tangible/physical activities such as writing the list of what we do in the morning (the nourishing and depleting list) to understand where I'm at. The body scanning and seated/lying practices I found really difficult and make me anxious but I think realising that this is a long term goal which may take a lot of time was a lightbulb moment. I think it's important for people (particularly adopters) not to feel any pressure to do the home study activities or maybe it just felt like there was a lot to do and felt overwhelming on top of everything else we have to deal with on a daily basis. I think that possibly needs simplifying or to be told that we were okay to just do one of the activities/practices rather than a long list that felt like it was building up every week very quickly.
- Outstanding, professional and kind course leaders.

- All very well set up. Lovely course leaders, calm and kind and intelligent. Managed group very well. Felt like they cared about me in particular. Thing I liked best was - not the practice (although that was good) but talking about how the practice worked and trying to think about how my mind/feelings works and therefore how I can control it/them more. Thank you.
- Really supportive the whole way through, from the taster session going forward.
- It has been great to be a part of and the facilitators have been great - particularly how perceptive they are in picking out the significant parts of people's contributions that aid everyone's understanding. I really enjoyed being part of an adoptive parents group and having time in breakout groups to hear about other people's experiences. I found the time of day really tricky as it was in the middle of the bedtime routine. With hindsight, rather than rushing elements of bedtime and creating anxiety in my daughter, I could have got my partner to have done the bathtime, but this would have been quite a change to our routine so I think it may have amounted to the same problem.
- Good support
- found the course challenging but immensely helpful and have given me some coping strategies that the more I do the easier I find to fit into my day to day life. loved the practical sessions - was really helpful to have a go and the support around the exercises was invaluable - it didn't matter if you thought you were supposed to feel a certain way and didn't
- Less time sharing in the large group because this took significant time and could've been done much better in small group where you get to interact with what is being said. I felt bored quite often during large group sharing but never during small group sharing.
- It was great, Jacky and Emma are really fantastic, nurturing teachers.
- I did find the first few weeks homework was unachievable for me (daily long practices) which did give me a wobble as in 'can i do this, is this for me?!'. But the latter weeks were more manageable in terms of home practice.

### **Feedback from October – December 2022 Group**

1) Please indicate on a scale of 1 (low) - 5 (high) please how much you valued the course  
7 responses



**2 Could you say what impact, if any, the course has had on your wellbeing (e.g overall mood, self-acceptance, kindness, capacity to notice/enjoy aspects of everyday life)?** 7 responses

It has improved my overall mood and kindness to myself and others.  
 Better at coping with stressful situations  
 Treating and judging myself with kindness  
 I gained a better understanding of myself and the tools I needed to help calm me in moments of stress. This has enabled me to manage situations better and more constructively  
 The course has really changed how I think of challenging situations. I don't always react the way I would like to but I can look at the situation and accept it for what it is which is a good start as it saves a lot of energy that used to be spent denying any issue existed.  
 Helping me have methods to calm myself when getting a bit worked up  
 The course has helped me to be kind to myself, be more accepting of good things and accepting when things do not go so well. I regularly spend time in our local park. Since starting the course I have become more appreciative of my surrounding local nature. I have also felt an awakening of my feelings and senses (e.g. sounds, smells and sight).

**3. Can you say what impact the course has had, if any, on your physical health? (e.g sleep, aches and pain, condition management, headaches)?** 7 responses

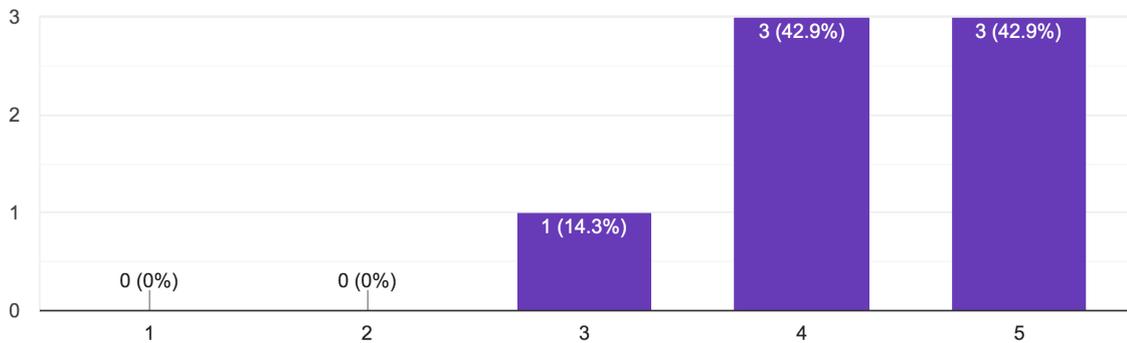
It has enabled me to be more aware of myself physically and mentally.  
 Sleeping well  
 -  
 I definitely always sleep better after a mindfulness practice  
 I do seem to be sleeping better. The guided body scan is a great way to relax and make my mind stop.  
 n/a  
 The course has made me more aware of how my body is feeling. For example noticing when pain or a physical feeling switches from one part of my body to another.

**4) Can you say what impact, if any, the course has had on your relationships? 7 responses**

- It has made them more positive.
- More connected
- Handing over some of my responsibility and therefore giving my partner more confidence with our children.
- My relationship with my family has improved as I am less stressed with them, myself and situations
- I think as I'm a beginner still I am not at the stage where I can say I've been able to improve the most important relationships in my life but this is a goal I work towards. I do think I feel more comfortable with myself which makes those more superficial relationships (parents at the school gate etc) a lot less stressful and more fun and relaxed.
- n/a
- My partner has previously attended the mindfulness course. We have a shared understanding of mindfulness and the range of tools and practices available for us to use. We have completed some of the practices together and plan to do so in the future (e.g. body scan). The great thing is we will be able to encourage other and offer suggestions of tools to use when we are having a good day or a bad day (e.g. noticing things and being kind to ourselves / appreciative / thankful)

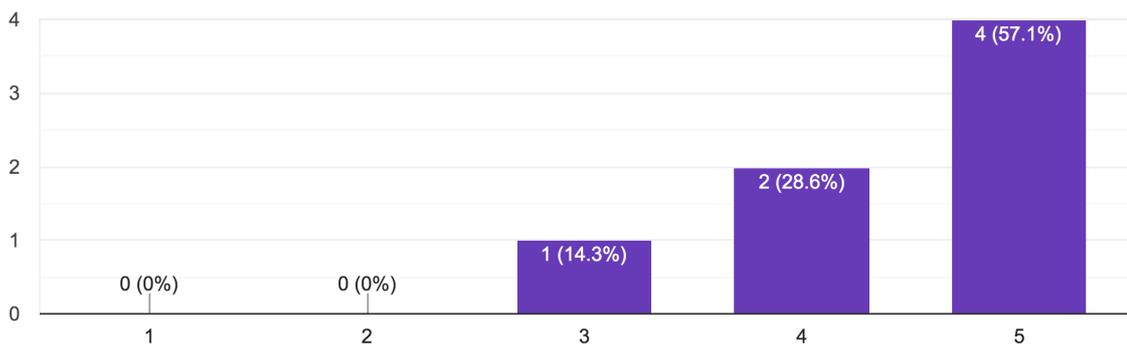
5) Self-care and self-compassion are linked with well-being and resilience. To what extent do you feel more confident about investing in your own well-being in the face of other demands?

7 responses



6) How confident are you that your mindfulness toolbox and attitudes (such as curiosity, kindness and non-judgement) will support you to manage stress?

7 responses



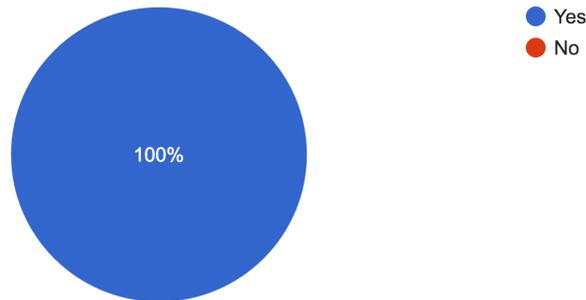
### 7) Can you say any more about your answers to Q5 and Q 6? (maybe examples) 5 responses

- I have realised how by investing in myself it has enriched my life, made me calmer, improved my relationships and my family have all benefitted in a positive way.
- I definitely still need to work on being kinder to myself but this course has helped to realise that I hadn't been and that it is okay to give yourself that kindness.
- I can finally see the value in doing something for me, like having a swim, even if it means some chores will be delayed. The swim (or time out to do a guided practice or just sit in the park with the dog) will help me have more patience and capacity to deal calmly with tantrums etc. I feel like I'm definitely still at the beginning of this but that the tools I've been given will be so helpful as long as I get more in the habit of using them!
- Realising that it's okay to put myself first sometimes, to work through thoughts and allow me to be kind and compassionate to myself.

- I feel the biggest challenge to continuing my mindfulness journey will be finding the time to invest in learning and developing knowledge of the practices, tools and techniques. My aim is to plan mindfulness into my daily routine with the hope that this becomes second nature. Examples that I have been practicing includes focusing on my strokes / stretches whilst swimming.

8) Would you recommend this course to other adoptive parents?

7 responses

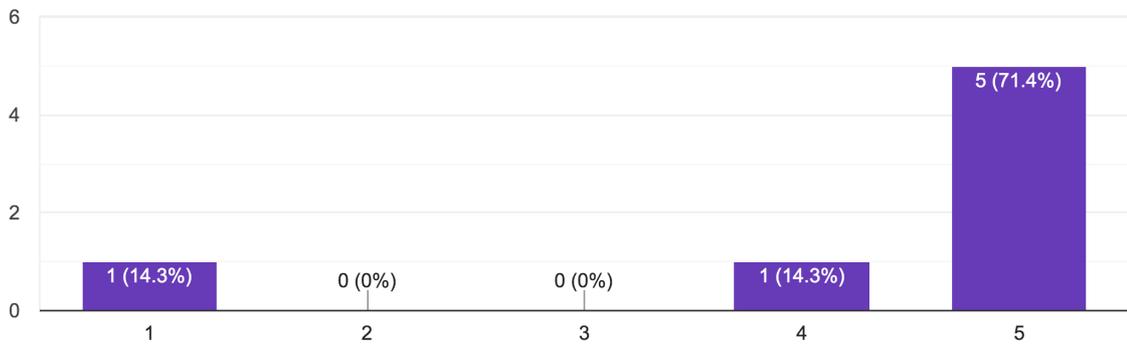


**9 Can you tell us what you would say to another adoptive parent considering this course** 6 responses

- You absolutely deserve to invest in yourself.
- It doesn't take away the complexities of family life, but it does take away some of the physical symptoms of stress, which can reduce some of the added pressure, making those complexities feel more manageable.
- It is so lovely to give yourself 2 hours a week and practise a valuable tool to get through the difficult days.
- I would say go for it, what have you got to lose. I don't know many adopters who don't put a lot of extra pressure on themselves, and this course is not saying don't try to be the best parent, it's just helping with doing that and importantly with being kind to yourself when you feel you have fallen short of that.
- Amazing set of tools to be aware of, definitely worth it.
- It will provide adopters with a set of tools, techniques and practices to become self aware, notice things more and help you to be kind to yourself (e.g. enjoying a cup of coffee and how it tastes, beauty and peace in nature).

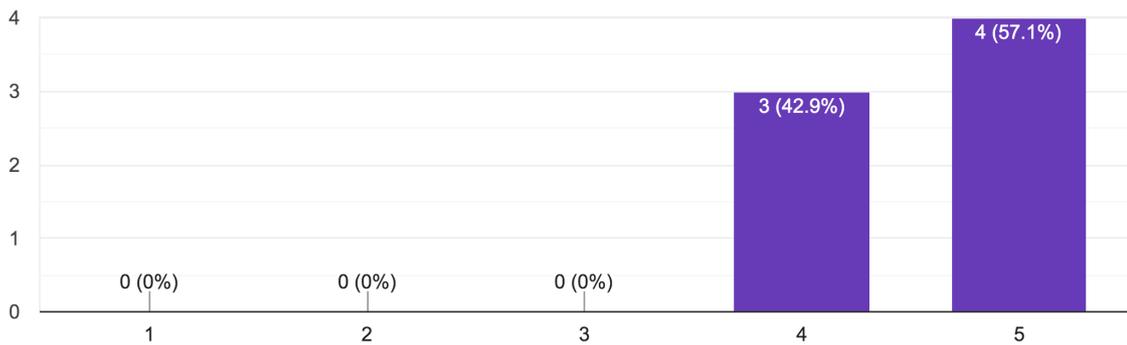
10) Please rate the importance to you of this course being exclusively for adoptive parents (as opposed to a public course or a course for parents generally)

7 responses



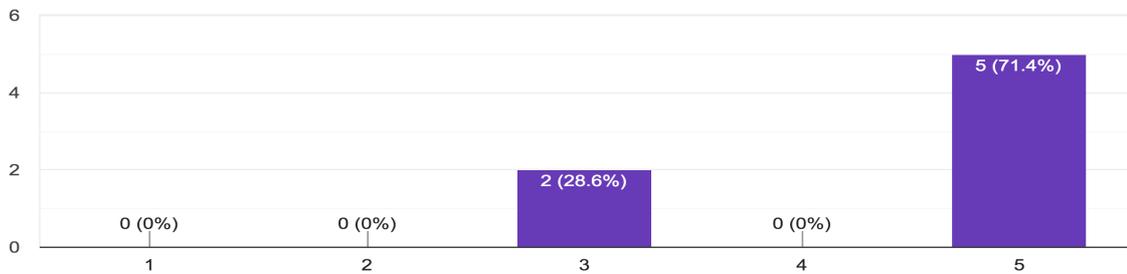
11) Please rate the value of the Handouts

7 responses



12) Please rate the importance to you of the offer of monthly post course "Deepen Your Practice" mindfulness support sessions

7 responses



**0= Not important 5- Very important**

**13) Is there anything else you would like to say about your experience with us? (teaching/ pre course calls/ support during the course/ suggestions for what would have made it a better experience for you). 7 responses**

- Everything about this course has been fantastic and so positive. Also enriching.
- I feel a physical weight lifted from my head.
- Both facilitators, Emma and Jacky, are excellent.
- Emma and Jacky were amazing and very supportive
- Thank you. That's really all I can say.
- The only thing I struggled with was the length of some of the home practices - especially the ones we did at the very beginning (c.30 mins). I think I would have found it easier to keep on top of it if there was even a single week with 10 min home practices to start with, to get more used to doing it every day.
- Thank you for a wonderful course and the opportunity to learn mindfulness.