Interpretation of interview 3

The interviewee presents with a strong connection to mindfulness. However, as the interview progresses it is clear that she has not always had this connection, finding in the first place she thought it was a load of crap.

***REC: And um, yeah, I, was well, this is a load bull crap. And then one, like, even my parents thought that. My Mum was a bit more lenient to the fact of, and she’s actually very good at it now. She uses a lot of the terminology just in day-to-day conversations, just because, ‘cos um, there’s an adult’s skills group as well, for the parents and carers.***

***INT: Oh, I see.***

***REC: My Dad on the other hand was like, No, this is a load of shyte, No. [giggles]. And he came round in the end. But um, … yeah. Um, at the beginning I did think that it was a load of crap and that they were just saying it ter, just to say it, I guess. But, like, now, it, it is a part of my everyday life, and like, if I am in a stressful situation and I need to just stop and calm down, it’s there …Lines 154-158***

***REC: I was wilful at first. I just … I laughed about it, I’m not going to lie. Um, but yeah. It, it was strange. Um, tsk, I actually remember my first day group – I joined at the same time as another girl with, we joined on the same day – lovely girl she was. And um, we did a Mindfulness exercise after everybody had been introduced, and usually you’re asked to close your eyes; if you don’t want to you don’t have to, but usually it just helps me if I do close my eyes, so I’m just like looking around the room at different things. And I was just sitting there, I was just like, why? What, What’s the point in this? We’re just sitting here doing nothing, listening to some recording that just makes me laugh a little bit. And then once, like, you go on and on and on and you do it, and you start to notice what it’s doing to you in a positive way. It was just like, Oh! Wow! It, it’s weird really. But I guess that’s the whole point of the therapy just to, well it’s helpful [chortles]. But yeah. Line166***

***It, it’s difficult to start with, and you will think that its just, Oh it doesn’t matter, it’s not going to help, but it does. And it’s, it’s a wonderful thing really. Yeah.***

***INT: What do you think made that change between …***

***REC: I just \*[00.50.57].***

***INT: … it’s not going to work ?***

***REC: Yeah. I guess it became more open to, like, um, the sort of thinking of things, and sort of like giving things a chance. ‘Cos if you’re going to be stuck for your whole life and not want to do anything, then what the hell are you going to do, if you stick to your guns and you do nothing, but you do nothing new and you don’t take chances, then what’s, what’s going to become of you really. Line 442-450***

She notes that using mindfulness takes openness and that wilfulness; stubbornness and black and white thinking will block a person being able to use mindfulness as it had with her dad and at times herself. The level of openness or willingness to use mindfulness she found was also affected by her mood.

***REC: There, there has been, yes, when I’ve been in er, what they would call “Wilful moods” where I’m just stubborn and not wanting to do part, and doing it because I have to do it, not because I feel it will help. And that’s kind of, the kicker with Mindfulness – if you don’t want to do it it’s not going to work.*** ***And, er if you’re not 100% focussed it’s not going to work. You’ve got to be, like, OK, bumpf. Not, Oh! What about this? What about this? Like. It works if you want it to, and you try for it to. It’s not just going to happen, simple. Yeah. Line 132-133***

***I don’t really remember a time when there wasn’t a bit of Mindfulness within the session. Yeah. Apart from one time where I was … Oh, I was so wilful, I wouldn’t even speak, Oh Good Lord! [chuckles]. Not one of my proudest moments. Line174***

***And that’s the kicker, because once you’re even a little bit wilful it’s not going to work. So you need to be in a mind state where you want to do it. Line 356***

On her journey to the point where mindfulness is in her everyday life the interviewee seemed surprised that it had a positive effect and found that there were unexpected benefits. She also noted that this journey took persistence and that mindfulness did not always work in the way she wanted.

***And yeah, like … and for instance, like OK, lets stop being bitchy about it, and lets just sit down, give it a go and see what happens. And the first time I did it and I did it, and yeah, it worked a bit, and I just felt a bit more calm. I was like, Ooh! OK, this could be going somewhere. And so I tried a little bit more to be more enthusiastic about it, and it really helped. Line 452***

***And then once you’ve calmed you can go back and think about it; and if you start shaking again, you can go back and do it again, and just do it and do it and do it until it’s worked. And sometimes it can take five minutes; it can take five hours. And that’s the kicker, because once you’re even a little bit wilful it’s not going to work. So you need to be in a mind state where you want to do it. Line 356***

The interviewee’s descriptions of use of mindfulness were in response to unwanted situations. Like emergency mindfulness when things were chaotic. However, there was a loose sense that she would turn to mindfulness in everyday moments when she felt unsettled by emotions or thoughts. She used the words ‘turn to’ as if mindfulness were a trustworthy friend. She described it as an alternative to getting external help.

***Um, at the beginning I did think that it was a load of crap and that they were just saying it ter, just to say it, I guess. But, like, now, it, it is a part of my everyday life, and like, if I am in a stressful situation and I need to just stop and calm down, it’s there …Line 158***

***It’s, it’s a strange subject really, but I … and it’s hard to explain, But I’ve kind of incorporated it into my daily life because … it just, it helps really. And it just, like, takes away the chaos of now-a-day life, and just lets everything slow down for a bit, and just calm down. But yeah. Line 210***

The interviewee described focus as central to accessing a mindful state of mind and described using the sense and the body as a route into a calm, relaxed state of being which for her was the state of mindfulness (heavy body, unaware of the external)

***And it … usually I personally use it as a way to, like, calm myself down in, like, drastic situations. And yeah, it was a bit difficult it in those, but it did help a lot. Line 76***

***Cos we have hectic minds; it’s what happens, like, we don’t usually think of one thing for a long, a longish period of time. But when you have to, like, it just … everything goes, slows down and you just chill. It’s like … It’s kind of a … well, yes, it’s meant to be a form of relaxation, ‘cos everything, so you’re thinking of one thing, then another, then another, then another, and then… With Mindfulness exercises you’re just sitting there for elongated periods of time, thinking of one thing and doing one thing, with nothing else, like, whizzing around in your head. And it’s very calming. And relaxing. And it’s like … it grounds you in a way. Yeah. Line 128***

***It calms you, and like it brings you back to yourself, instead of thinking about everything else going on, like daily stresses and whatnot. It just brings you back to you, and just … your mind, and just letting everything calm down for a moment before whizzing back up into real life again.Line 142***

***Mmmm. Very much so. ‘Cos it … as I said, it calms you down, if like you’re really angry and, like, in um, in a crisis mode really. Um, if you don’t have a way to contact the therapist or crisis line, and then, like, if you use your skills it calms you down and brings you back to um, well the middle path as we call it. ‘Cos we have a diagram which is emotion thinking, and like, um, rational thinking. And so, like, when you’re really upset, and you’re thinking about something, you think everything, like, your, your emotions um, taking control. And it’s the same kind of thing in, like, yeah. Line 184***

***But it’s speeds my heart up; it … adrenalin is just … yeah. And so, calming my breathing down using 5:3:6 it just lets everything just simmer down for a second, and so I can walk the middle path again without being completely emotion in mind, and wanting to take drastic measures and doing target behaviours, which we’re not allowed … well, I wouldn’t say we’re not allowed to, it’s strongly disagreed on. Line 236***

The interviewee described mindfulness as pressing the pause button and this pause seemed to allow her to take a step back and gain a new perspective on her situation. She used the work OK to indicate a stop, taking stock and then pushing on with a decision based on the insight she had gained from the mindful pause. There was also a sense of mindfulness providing an escape from the stresses of everyday life and emotional pain.

***So I looked at it, on the ceiling above my bed, so I saw it, and I was, OK, stop doing what you’re doing; so I just completely stopped still; I took a step back; I did it physically because that is usually what helps me; so I was like, OK, observe what’s going on here. What am I feeling? What am I wanting to do? What should I do? Line 284***

***‘Cos, I don't know whether it’s the correct way to use it, which that’s a complete judgement, but um, I do use it as a calming tool, because life is, as I’ve said many a time, life is hectic and sometimes we can’t get away from it, like we can use it with um, like, leisure therapies, like the course I’m in, or some of that; or treating yourself, or just, like, taking holidays and … And if you can’t do any of that just sitting there and just blocking everything else a bit, and just focussing on one thing; just … it’s, it’s wonderful really; just knowing that you … it’s not exactly an escape, it’s more just a … a pau-, it’s a pause button on life for a bit. Line 383***

Mindfulness caused a shift in mind and body leaving her relating to her external experience in a different way. Once she was in this state she had a different starting point from which to make decisions/act; a starting point that meant she had more self-control, avoiding harmful behaviour.

***It was strange for the first couple of times I did it; I was just like, this is playing with my mind, like … It was weird, but you get used to it, and you’re like, even in drastic situations, like, I do have control over myself, and I can think specific things at specific times, but it’s just the skills that are required to do something. And that was what they teach you in skills group. Line 104***

The interviewee talked about the idea of walking the middle path. This was described as a shift emotionally and a thought process of weighing up different options.

***Then when you’ve got like bridges which you build, you have the middle part, so you’re thinking, you’re taking into consideration the emotional suggestions, and the rational suggestions, and just walking the middle path, as we call it. Line 186***

Mindfulness had the effect of helping to regulate her emotions leaving her feeling calmer and more in control. Several times she referred to the process as bringing you back to you, allowing you just to be you. This seemed like an escape from external pressures and expectations. This simplification seemed important and she had a positive relationship with the idea of Just sitting or just breathing.

***It calms you, and like it brings you back to yourself, instead of thinking about everything else going on, like daily stresses and whatnot. It just brings you back to you, and just … your mind, and just letting everything calm down for a moment before whizzing back up into real life again Line 142***

***And usually it would take me … because the, the … it’s an A4 book, it’s very thick, and the pictures are rather big, and so it will take me about an hour, which gives me a lot of time to calm down and just think about the colouring. And then once … like if I think about the situation I was in before, like before I started the colouring, it kind of makes you realise that it wasn’t all that, and that it wasn’t as, like, drastic as I’d made it out to be, because emotionally you enhance what you’re feeling, like … and if you’re in a bad mood especially, it, like … once you feel something in emotion mind it will multiply it, and it will hurt.***

***And so by going into, well using Mindfulness you, it calms you, and it bring … as I said, it brings you back to you for a minute, and then once you’ve done the tasks that you need to do to calm down, you try and go back and think about it, or you completely disregard it – it depends on what it is. But you can go back and think about it and be, like, was this actually as drastic as I thought it was? And usually it’s no. Lines 308-310***

The interviewee saw mindfulness as a practice of exercises that brought calm to her and a practical tool for living her life differently through considering her speech and actions more carefully. She used this sort of mindful language with her mother to facilitate a better relationship between them. Mindful language seemed important for remembering what to do in a crisis, making mindfulness part of her everyday life and communicating with others connected to DBT (therapist, mother, other patients)

***Um … usually my Mum will say, OK, how can you say that Mindfully? Or, How can you say that non-judgementally?*** ***Line 399***

***REC: Well, how can you take notice of what you’re saying. ‘Cos sometimes, personally, I talk before I think. And so I could be saying something completely stupid and potentially offensive, and Mum will be like, OK, stop. How can you say that mindfully? So I’ll go back, I’ll think about what I’ve said - If I’ve said something offensive I’ll apologise - and then you either rephrase it or you just … you say it in a way where you’re actually, you’re thinking about what you’re saying. So it’s kind of think before you speak. So you think about what you’re saying, and then it’s like, OK this is what I want to say, and then you say it.Line 403-405***

***And Mindfulness has kind of, it’s helped me and my sister and my Mum a lot, because we’re in the crisis … well mostly me and my sister to be honest, in crisis situations we’re like, OK, then this is what we’re feeling and thinking, and wanting to do; what are we going to take from this in val-, in validation to what we’re going to do and what would be positive. So it goes like that And it’s helped us through a lot of stuff. Line 427***

Other people were important on her journey with mindfulness, offering support, reminding her to use mindfulness. She believed that the therapists did not really give a balanced view of mindfulness leaving the hard bits out – the side effects – which were that you had to be in the right mindset.

***And Mindfulness, they spoke about it in a way that, I don't really know how to explain it really … They … I wouldn’t say “bigged it up”, but like they were biased, but like not completely [chuckles]. So they’d be like, These are all the benefits of Mindfulness; yes, there are some, like, I wouldn’t say side-effects, well there are some bits that aren’t so great, but these are the benefits. So they’d be like that. Line 433***