Interpretation of Interview 1

The interviewee in interview One has an uncertain relationship with mindfulness. Her motivations to engage with mindfulness are mainly external – other people telling me to, the group is doing it so I should join in.

***I think, although I’ve been there six months I’m still one of the kind of, like, newer, members of the group, so when I got there … I don't know, like everybody kind of, kind of seemed to just be doing it, and so I kind of just jumped in and [giggles], um, yeah, did it with everyone else, and it still seemed a bit weird for a while, but then I kind of got it a little bit more, and I think I can do it a bit more in my own way*. Line 80**

She seems really unsure that she has got what mindfulness is about and believes she may have missed what everyone else has understood – I can do it a bit in my own way. She sees herself as a novice believing that 6 months might not be enough time to have understood, highlighting an idea that mindfulness is a long process of uncovering a mystery.

***Yeah, ‘cos … yeah, you’re like, well they’ve told me to do this thing so I’m gonna do it ‘cos they know what they’re talking about I guess [giggles], um, but it still seems a bit, like … yeah. Line 140***

She seems to have huge reservations about trying mindfulness and defers to the ‘professionals’. The reservations have not gone away - it still seems a bit like….yeah. She can’t quite describe her reservation but later describes that she sees mindfulness as immeasurable and that she is unsure of what mindfulness is supposed to do for her.

From the outset she finds the idea of mindfulness scary, pointless and weird. She does not have any conviction that mindfulness will be useful to her and therefore just jumps in hoping it will be of use. However, she struggles to get away from the idea that mindfulness is simply weird or silly and seems embarrassed by the practices that are suggested to her.

***Yeah, yeah. I think it took a while … I mean I’ve only really … I still, mindfulness still really confuses me because it, its like why … its like why does it work, and its … At first I was like, this is so stupid [giggles]. Like, it seems like one of those weird meditation things, and … yeah*. Line 50**

***Yeah. I, I think it was during my DBT assessment kind of thing, and yeah, the person assessing me she was like, we’re going to do a mindfulness thing, and it was about, like, imagining your thoughts floating on a leaf, like away, or something, and I was just sitting there like this, the stupidest thing I’ve ever done, like [giggles]. Like what is the point of this? And I couldn’t do it at all, because I couldn’t imagine it, I just … I was just like this is stupid.* Line 54**

***Oh no! Actually that was the time [giggles]] before that as well. Um, at the university like counsellor, and she was kind of trying to explain it, about it, by saying like focussing on an object, and stuff like that. But it was a, like a plant pot, and I just didn’t get it. I just didn’t get it. I was like what? What is the point? Why am I looking at the plant pot [giggles] kind of thing, kind of thing? Yeah.* Line 72**

***Yeah. Well there is. You’re just sitting down, like, looking at a coin, or like, really, really focussing on eating a piece of orange, so it does seem a little bit silly, like, explaining it to somebody would seem really silly [giggles]. But yeah.* Line 340**

Her uncertainty about mindfulness remains over time although she has a sense that her relationship to mindfulness has got clearer and easier since she first began and also that they may continue to develop.

She sees some parts of mindfulness that she might have got good at or started to do ‘right’. However, overall she is struggling with the ideas of mindfulness and whether she is getting it right and will be able to get it right in the future.

***REC: I was just … it just seemed like really hippy, and kind of … And then I think I was also a bit frustrated because I couldn’t do it. Like, and I … I like to do things [giggles], in a kind of right, and I was quite frustrated ‘cos …***

***INT: So there’s this sense that it had to be right? I had to be …***

***REC: Yeah. Yeah. Which I’ve kind of gotten out of it; it’s not about being right, but it took me a while to get there.* Line 58-62**

***Yeah. Yeah. ‘Cos, I don't know … like, … yeah. I guess it’s that same thing like you can’t tell if you’re doing it right, or whatever. And has it, like, worked or not. [giggles]. Um … because its supposed to be like this ongoing kind of thing. It’s not like just something you do once and it fixes this thing; like it’s supposed to be kind of, ongoing. It’s kind of confusing. Yeah.* Line 128**

She repeats throughout the interview some key elements of mindfulness as she experiences it. Focussing on just one thing, bringing her mind back when it wanders, seeking relaxation/self soothing. However, she is not sure completely what the effects of this should be. Her relationship to mindfulness is based around carrying out mindfulness exercises. She has found that by doing a mindfulness activity that she can order her thoughts better and slow down racing thoughts.

***Um … Yeah, I mean we’ve done some similar to that um, like being quite still, and yeah … because its like the focussing on one thing, and its that um, he said, like, if you find your thoughts wandering off, I think that’s the main mindfulness thing that it kind of took me a while to get my head around, but that’s like the main thing I was like , Ah no! My thoughts were wandering off, I’m doing it wrong. But then I realised that that’s kind of, that the mindfulness thing is bringing it back afterwards, it’s not wrong for your thoughts to, like, wander off and stuff. Um …* Line 46**

***Um … That I could kind of, like, the slowing of my thoughts down so that I can, so that I’m not just getting overwhelmed by, like, just stuff in my head and like input and stuff; but then also I guess being like mindful of the body sensations and stuff so that I can figure out what I’m feeling and kind of do something [giggles] before it just gets to really, really high emotions, and, and I’m like, Oh! [giggles] OK. Like, that escalated.* Line 170**

***I don't know. I guess, I, I would say, like, its just doing one thing and focussing on one thing, being in the moment. Um, and the main thing is that you kind of notice when your thoughts wander from that one thing, and then bring it back. So, um … I don't know whether I’d be able to explain why you would do that [giggles], like … or what it really helps with, still, I don't think.* Line 290**

***Yeah, um … [pause]. Yeah, for me I guess I have become more aware of what I’m feeling, like, and … I don't know, like … obviously the times where I can like slow down my thoughts. I don’t [giggles] … I’m still, I’m still a bit in the dark [giggles]. Yeah.* Line 300**

She has a sense that mindfulness could also help her to understand her feelings better through awareness of her body/ sensations. However, she has an uneasy relationship with the idea of paying attention to her body as she believes this is particularly difficult for her and has found she has become more distressed before when paying attention to her body.

***Um … I think at first it was kind of a negative kind of, emotional effect, because, … I don't know. Like, I was suddenly being more aware of what I was feeling, and kind of, yeah, my body and stuff, and it was kind of like this is scary, [giggles]. Um … But I’m not sure, like now, whether it kind of has an emotional effect on me, but I’m not really sure.* Line 230**

***yeah, I don't know. Like, … I don't know. The only thing I can think of at the moment is that we did, like, er, one, an exercise in group where we actually like, have to, like, sit with the discomfort of, like, I don't know, just feeling like little things in our body that feel, like, uncomfortable and resist the urge to like do anything about them. And I found that really hard [giggles]. I was like … So yeah, it’s kind of uncomfortable in that way, sometimes.* Line 242**

***Um … I still kind of don’t do the kind of body sensation [giggles] ones, or like, well that first kind of floating, thoughts floating away on a leaf thing, ‘cos I can’t visualise things very well. But I’m like … its, it’s a bit hard to work out whether, so should I try and improve on that, or does it not matter, and I should just go with the stuff that works, or seems to be, like, going OK, and that I like.* Line 258**

There is a sense of the mindfulness activity being a way of getting her mind into a place where she can then begin to deal with the difficult situation differently.

***I find sometimes I just get overwhelmed with the amount of stuff that I feel like I’ve got to do, and I feel like I’ve got a whole long list, and if I just go, like do the washing-up mindfully, then after that um, I could kind of process things a bit more clearly, and not just, be like my thoughts just running around Line 100***

***Yeah. Like, I think it just slows it down a bit, ‘cos, not just like a million worries on top of each other [giggles], like just going too fast, like, they kind of overlap and I can’t process any of them. So it just, like, slows it down a bit so that they’re still there but I can think about them, like, kind of one by one, rather than a big mess. Yeah. Line 104***

***Um … I can think of a time, I’m just trying to think what was going on. [pause] Um … like it was before I went on holiday, so a couple of weeks ago, and I was really stressed out about having to pack and I was like, I’m going to forget something. And … or, you know, go wrong and everything, and I was like … ‘cos I have like that kind of self- soothe/mindfulness kind of box thing, and I got the bubbles out and just um, yeah, kind of watched the bubbles kind of popping. Um … and, I don't know, after that I was like, OK I can just breathe, I can do this kind of thing. I don’t … yeah. Line 190***

***INT: What do you think happened in you that, I don't know, what … how would you describe what happened that got you to that point where you could breathe?***

***REC: [pause]. I don't know, just focussing on one thing, rather than, like, just everything [giggles], if that makes sense, ‘cos I, like, I had a lot of, like, thoughts going around in my head and then, like, sensory [giggles] stuff from outside, like the noises outside, and it just all gets very [giggles] kind of loud, if that makes sense …***

***INT: Yeah.***

***REC: … and then focussing on what, that one thing, and just doing that one thing, and bringing thought back to that one thing, kind of, … Then after I’ve done that for a little while I can kind of focus on one thing at once, rather than everything.***

***INT: So it changed the situation afterwards, in what way?***

***REC: Um … well in this particular instance instead of thinking, Oh my God, I have, like, a million things to do, I was, could think, OK, well I’ll just, I’ll do this first, and then that, and then it’ll be fine [giggles], kind of thing. But yeah, I don't know. Lines 191-203***

The interviewee is unsure whether she should persevere with activities that she finds difficult or whether she should focus on the on the activities that are easy and she enjoys.

***I don't know. Um … [pause]. I don't know, like, I kind of … like people in the past have said to me that I’m not very connected to, like, what my body is doing, and when I’m asked to focus on, like, my, the sensation to my body, I find it really hard, and I think she’s trying to help, like mindfulness with that, because obviously that links into other things, like if I’m able to tell what my body is kind of doing I might be able to kind of tell what emotion I’m having, and things like that. So I think that’s why she was trying to help with, like, that bit. Kind of. Line 116***

***Um … I still kind of don’t do the kind of body sensation [giggles] ones, or like, well that first kind of floating, thoughts floating away on a leaf thing, ‘cos I can’t visualise things very well. But I’m like … its, it’s a bit hard to work out whether, so should I try and improve on that, or does it not matter, and I should just go with the stuff that works, or seems to be, like, going OK, and that I like. Line 258***

There are some particular things that make it harder for her to do the mindfulness exercises – high emotion, when they are not activity based, when she becomes frustrated, personal preferences and abilities.

***I think sometimes, like, ‘cos, you know, we like do the chain analysis, and things like that, and obviously it won’t come up, like, later in the chain, but its like maybe if I’d done some kind of mindfulness right at the start, then things wouldn’t, possibly, like, snowball. And its kind of come up like, like with that, but honestly its one of, like, … I feel like I’m quite confident with, like, the emotional regulation and distress tolerance, but the mindfulness I’m kind of not, and I don't know whether that’s just because its less, like … you can’t kind of quantify it, its this weird thing [giggles], that you, you can’t really tell whether its, like, is it working or not because its not something that’s, like, works. I don't know. It’s just weird. I find it really strange. Line 124***

There are times when the interviewee seems very disconnected to mindfulness describing herself as just sitting there. She is not connected enough to the idea/experience of mindfulness to see it as something she would continue once she finishes DBT.

***Yeah. I, I think it was during my DBT assessment kind of thing, and yeah, the person assessing me she was like, we’re going to do a mindfulness thing, and it was about, like, imagining your thoughts floating on a leaf, like away, or something, and I was just sitting there like this, the stupidest thing I’ve ever done, like [giggles]. Like what is the point of this? And I couldn’t do it at all, because I couldn’t imagine it, I just … I was just like this is stupid. Line 58***

***Um, at the university like counsellor, and she was kind of trying to explain it, about it, by saying like focussing on an object, and stuff like that. But it was a, like a plant pot, and I just didn’t get it. I just didn’t get it. I was like what? What is the point? Why am I looking at the plant pot [giggles] kind of thing, kind of thing? Yeah. Line 72***

***I think I’ll probably continue doing it, but, because I’m only kind of half-way through it’ll probably develop and, like, my feeling might change about it, and … I, I don't really know [giggles] I, like, after DBT. I’ll probably keep some of the stuff around, but I’m not sure yet. Line 278***

She wonders whether her connection to mindfulness might develop more over time and repeats throughout the interview that mindfulness requires time and practice to understand and fully experience. There is a sense that she is hoping/waiting for a mystery about this weird thing called mindfulness to be uncovered.

***INT: Have you got any kind of inklings of what, you know, what its done for you, not what kind of it’s supposed to do, but … ?Yeah, um … [pause]. Yeah, for me I guess I have become more aware of what I’m feeling, like, and … I don't know, like … obviously the times where I can like slow down my thoughts. I don’t [giggles] … I’m still, I’m still a bit in the dark [giggles]. Yeah. Lines 298-300***

She states that the approach of the person explaining mindfulness can have an impact and that it needs to be down to earth, with discussion of the point of silly exercises discussed.

***REC: Um … Well I have to say, like, the first person, like the person that’s asked me, was like a psychiatrist, and it, kind of, felt like, yeah this is just some rubbish you’re telling me, like. I don't know, like, I don't know; when I, when I’ve … ‘cos my individual therapist is a nurse and just, for me, kind of personally, like, the situation she, she is like more down-to-earth and so her telling me about it, like, made it seem less like, airy fairy; this psychiatrist just said do this thing, in a way. I don't know. Like, its not just something a doctor has been, like, yeah this works, kind of. I don't know. Does that make any sense[giggles].***

***INT: What, what do you think she said or did that made it seem less airy-fairy?***

***REC: Um … I’m trying to remember back now [giggles]. [pause]. I can’t remember.***

***INT: That’s OK.***

***REC: I really can’t. Oh no! I think she might have just taken a bit more time to kind of explain it, maybe, rather than just kind of throwing me in, like, yeah, we’re going to do this mindful exercise now [giggles]. But I’m not sure really, ‘cos it was a while ago, I can’t really …***

***INT: And how about in the group when its sort of introduced to the group?***

***REC: Um … I thought it was a bit weird at first; it was like the gong thing [giggles]. Um … But now I think its quite good with that, just the beginning and end, like very obvious. Um … I’m not sure.***

***INT: Do you think they could have done anything differently in how they kind of … ?***

***REC: Um … Not really, no. I th-, I do actually, I quite like how it was done in the group, that everyone does it at the same time, regardless of how long they’ve been there, and stuff. Because, obviously, me coming in as a newbie, I w-, I was like, What is this? But everyone else was kind of doing it, so you just do it as well [giggles], . It makes you feel, like, silly in a way. Um …***

***INT: There’s a silly factor to it?***

***REC: Yeah. Well there is. You’re just sitting down, like, looking at a coin, or like, really, really focussing on eating a piece of orange, so it does seem a little bit silly, like, explaining it to somebody would seem really silly [giggles]. But yeah. Lines 320-340***