

HEALTH & WELLBEING **MINDFULNESS**

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After a while, doing our “homework” on our own, changed from feeling like a chore to something to look forward to; it was an investment in ourselves.

By the time the eight weeks were over we were armed with a new awareness of stress indicators and a toolkit of strategies that, since then, have been regularly put to use.

The effects on the lives of students is wide-ranging. “People who suffer from anxiety or panic attacks, they learn to observe when they’re having an anxiety attack,” explains Nelum. “Before it arrives, they have all the symptoms because they are mindful and are aware of their body and their mind. So they prepare themselves.

“Rather than running away from the anxiety, they face it mindfully and then it’s just another moment in life. With mindfulness it will decrease.”

She tells me about some student successes: one turned to mindfulness after

‘Once you change yourself, it’s not just for you, it affects the others around you’

10 years of anxiety attacks and taking antidepressants. Now she is free of medication.

Another student had suffered eight heart attacks and came to his first class a week after his most recent one.

By the end of the eight-week course, Nelum describes him as a different person. Now in his 70s, he regularly returns to the centre to take part in masterclasses and retreats.

The centre works with corporate clients as well as medical staff, including GPs – some of whom now prescribe mindfulness to patients. She also teaches schoolchildren to manage stress – useful in the age of social media.

As a final word of caution, with a multitude of mindfulness classes on offer, Nelum advises those interested to check teachers’ qualifications and make sure they have trained at either Bangor, Oxford or Aberdeen universities.

Still think you don’t have time to be mindful?

“Some people think it is selfish, going to a two-hour class that takes you away from your family and work,” says Nelum. “But once you change yourself, it’s not just for you, it affects the others around you.”

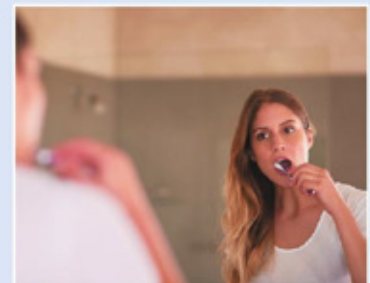
Find out more at glasgowmindfulnesscentre.co.uk; new for this year, Nelum is organising a mindfulness and yoga retreat to Sri Lanka, June 19-30, with prices from £900 excluding flights.



■ Nelum Jayakody has helped students to live free of physical pains and antidepressants

Start each day the mindful way

- ▶ When you wake up, pay attention to your breath – and take five mindful breaths.
- ▶ When you get out of bed, pay attention to your posture. When you’re brushing your teeth and having a shower, focus on what you’re doing and try not to let your mind wander.
- ▶ Eat mindfully – think about how food tastes and how it feels. Have gratitude for your food.
- ▶ Use the STOP sign: **S**top; **T**ake a breath; **O**bserve your breath, mind and body; then **P**roceed.
- ▶ When you’re walking, pay attention to your body and your feet, always bringing your balance to the feet and feeling the grounding sensation in the here and now.
- ▶ Take a three-minute breathing space to



step out of being in automatic pilot mode. Take three minutes to be aware of yourself in the present moment, acknowledging how you feel, then focus on each breath to anchor you in the present. Expand your awareness of your breathing to include your body, posture and facial expression.