

**Mindfulness for people with tinnitus**

David Spicer, UKCP Registered integrative  
psychotherapeutic and CBT counsellor.

In this session, David focused in on how to manage stress and anxiety brought on by tinnitus symptoms effectively using mindfulness and demonstrated to the group some effective breathing techniques and some visualisation ideas. David explained that awareness of tinnitus may make us feel stressed, which alongside stress present in our everyday life, can continue the cycle of producing and maintaining the tinnitus pattern.

**What is mindfulness and how can it help with tinnitus?**

Mindfulness is all about paying attention to the present moment, without getting stuck in the past or worrying about the future, not letting negative thoughts take over and bombard our minds. Mindfulness allows the mind to concentrate on all the things around us, whether it be when spending time with friends and family or going for a walk out in the country taking in every sight, smell and sound around you, rather than just concentrating on the negative - the tinnitus.



David told us that we need to learn to show empathy for ourselves. 'Compassion' is the key word

**What is Compassion/self compassion?** Compassion for others - A feeling of deep sympathy and sorrow for another who is stricken by misfortune, accompanied by a strong desire to alleviate the suffering.

Compassion for myself - A strong desire to alleviate the suffering that I experience. Willingness to help ourselves. David went on to invite the group to discuss the distinction between sympathy and empathy.

How Self-compassion might help Tinnitus

If you have any comments or questions regarding the Tinnitus Support Group, please contact:  
Pam Spicer, TSG Co-ordinator, NDA, 120 Thorpe Road, Norwich, NR1 1RT  
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- Promotes a non-judgemental self observer.
- Promotes kindness to oneself.
- Learns to live in the present.
- Aims to help cope with the noises by understanding that they may be unpleasant but they are not a threat - Combating the inner fear that whatever the root cause of tinnitus is is a threat - 'Have i got something else wrong with me?'

By spending some time each day being 'mindful' we are helping ourselves to lower the stress and anxiety tinnitus can cause and not letting it have such a huge presence in our lives.

### **Breathing exercise - Mindful Breathing**

- Breath out completely before taking in the breath.
- Breath in fully but naturally through your nose or mouth.
- Count the breath in for 4 seconds and count out for 5.
- After a while try not to count the breaths but just reach a rhythm that is comfortable for you.

**Visualisation for beginners** - David talked us through a good visualisation technique to whilst doing the breathing exercise.

*Imagine yourself in your kitchen, everything around you, the layout of your kitchen, where everything is. Imagine having a lemon in your hand, reaching for a chopping board, putting the lemon on the chopping board. Going to your knife drawer a getting out a sharp knife from it and then cutting through the lemon. Now imagine the smell that hits you, the cold and wetness of the lemon juice running over your hands, the texture of the outside of the lemon and the flesh inside.*

We talked about sympathetic nervous system and how mindfulness helps to regulate stress hormones particularly cortisol.

### **A longer visualisation technique**

*Imagine going for a long walk in the forest with some friends and family. Take in every sight, how it's a beautiful sunny day. You notice the tallness of the trees and how they are swaying at the top with the slight wind there is and the noises of the trees rustling. The fresh air that's all around, the calmness of the surroundings. One of the children you are with, maybe a child, grandchild, small niece or nephew, you can see is picking some flowers. They then run in your direction with the flower and places it in your hand, you then see that they have picked you a snow drop. You notice how beautiful the flower is, how perfect it looks, the colours and shape of it.. You feel how wonderful it feels to be given such a lovely flower by the child and you have a sense of their kindness and how to give that kindness to yourself - compassion.*

### **Next TSG meeting**

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Our next meeting will be on Monday 16th November 2015, starting at 7pm. This talk will be an opportunity to hear Josephine Swinhoe, Managing Director of the Tinnitus Clinic, London, discuss the Neuroscience of tinnitus plus a Q&A sessions afterwards.

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