



**Using mindfulness techniques to
improve focus and concentration
for university students:
a group based approach.**

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What did we do?

Three week experiential mindfulness based group program
to assist with focus and concentration

Aims of program

Improve academic performance by increasing focus and
concentration

Assist students to deal more effectively with study related
stress and the pressures of daily life

Increase overall wellbeing

Why did we do it?

There is a high prevalence of psychological distress and mental health problems among Australian University students resulting in:

- (1) A reduced capacity for students to meet their educational demand
- (2) A high demand for one on one counselling services.

International students are a particularly vulnerable group but less likely to seek support from counselling services

Benefits of Mindfulness for students?

Improve cognitive skills required for academic performance

(Zeidan 2010; Mrazek 2013)

Reduce stress

(Shapiro et al. 1998)

Increase psychological wellbeing

(Van Gordon et al. 2013)

Increase physiological wellbeing

(Hassed 2009)

Facilitate increases in adaptive coping style

(Palmer 2009)

Assist in the reduction of negative mood

(Lynch, 2011)

Reduce mood disturbance and improve emotional regulation

(Rosenzweig et al. 2003) / Van Gordon 2013)

So what is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness involves consciously bringing awareness to your here-and-now experience with openness, curiosity and flexibility. It has been defined as **purposefully and non-judgementally paying attention to the present moment.** (Jon Kabat-zinn)

Being mindful turns off your auto pilot mode

Mindfulness is about waking up, connecting with ourselves, and appreciating the fullness of each moment of life. It is the art of conscious living. It is a profound way to enhance psychological and emotional resilience, and increase life satisfaction.

Program outline

The program was advertised as a three week
“Improve your Focus and Concentration Workshop”

1 - Introduction to mindfulness

(mindfulness of eating, mindfulness of the body, barriers & home practice)

2 - Being aware

(cognitive defusion, hands as thoughts, study visualisation exercises & leaves on a steam)

3 - Being present with your thoughts

(accepting thoughts and feelings, defusing from thoughts & mindfulness of breath.
Discussion and handouts - mindfulness in daily life, reducing study stress
and increasing overall wellbeing)

How did we promote the program?

Poster and fliers

Counsellors and disability advisors

Key teaching staff

Student portal

UniSA mindfulness [website](#)

Improve your focus and concentration

Would you also like to learn how to:

- Deal more effectively with study stress and the pressures of daily life,
- Make the most of your potential,
- Increase your energy, wellbeing and feel happier

This 3 week workshop covers the principles and practice of mindfulness; a skill for restoring a sense of calm and clarity to your mind . It will focus specifically on skills that will help you to improve your academic performance, cope with the current pressures of final assignments and exams and make study life more enjoyable. In all the sessions, you will be guided through a range of simple exercises and techniques that you can put into practice immediately.

When: Tuesday 25th March, 1st April and 8th April, 3pm to 4pm

Where: GK2.16, City West Campus

You need to attend all 3 sessions as skills and practices will be built on each week

To register go to

<http://w3.unisa.edu.au/counsellingservices/workshops/focus-concentration.asp> or contact ania.zysk@unisa.edu.au



Who delivered the program?

Counsellors trained in MBCT

New counsellors shadowed experienced facilitators

Regular mindfulness practice in team meetings

KAI-POWER.COM

How did we deliver the program?

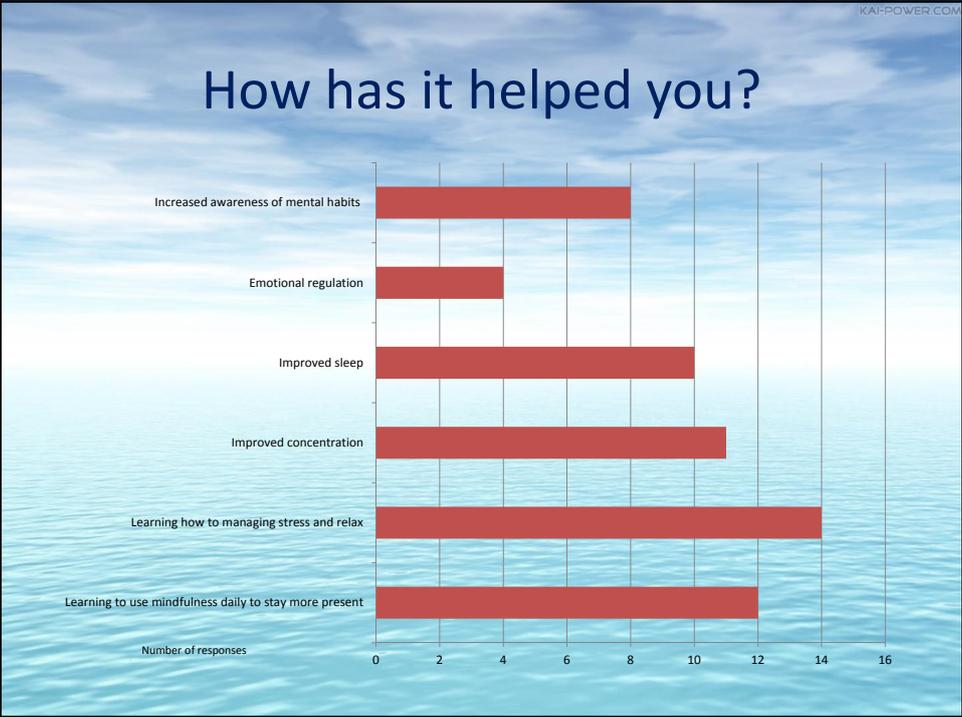
One city and one metro campus workshop delivered each semester

Students registered online

Students were directed to the video and the online practice exercises before registering

During 2013 and 2014, 245 students participated

Pre and post workshop data was collected



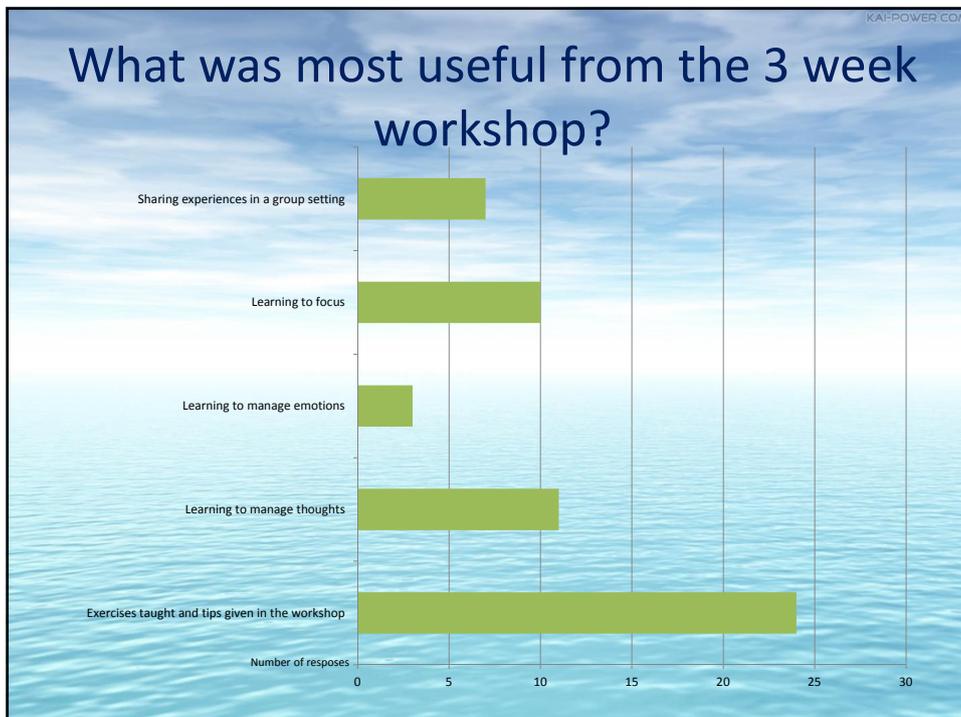
How has it helped you?

I am able to catch myself when I overthink and worry.

I realise when my mind is drifting, when I really need to be focused and I can bring it back now.

Being able to accept how I am thinking and feeling and just getting on with what I have to do.

It's given me skills to deal with the pressure of full time study and it's a reminder to take time for myself.



What was most useful from the 3 week workshop?

Learning very practical & easy techniques for diffusing anxiety, and being able to practice as part of a group.

Hearing other people's experiences was really helpful to make me feel not alone.

Learning about the different distractions experienced by students and what techniques work for them.

Participant feedback

All students stated that they would recommend the workshop to others

"This was a really valuable experience & has helped me feel more on top of my study"

"Without these tips I probably would have quit, but with these new skills I feel I can deal with the pressure"

The results demonstrate that the three week mindfulness program is an effective and innovative way to support student learning and wellbeing as well as providing a non-threatening way to engage with the counselling service.

Mindfulness Practice

