

Participant Information for Group Program – Mindful Walk & Talk for Wellbeing

This program is about connection - connecting with nature, connecting with community, and connecting with yourself.

A small Mindful Walk and Talk for Wellbeing group meets for four sessions each month in the natural landscapes of Melbourne's Inner North. Each walk combines gentle mindfulness practices and reflective conversation, inviting you to be present and notice what's unfolding within and around you. These experiences provide opportunities to nurture mental health and wellbeing.

No prior experience with mindfulness is needed - just comfortable shoes and a curious mind.

Purpose

These workshops are designed as health promotion for mental health. They are not a therapy group or clinical service.

What to bring

Sessions take place outdoors in natural landscapes on paved and non-paved areas so wear comfortable, weather-appropriate clothing and shoes. Sessions will go ahead in most weather, so dress appropriately for the conditions. If rain is expected, a raincoat or umbrella is advisable, and a hat and sunscreen in the sun. If the weather is unsafe (e.g. storms, strong wind, or a heatwave) the session can be moved online.

Activities

As well as guided mindfulness practices, mindful walking, and group discussions, activities drawn from qigong or art therapy might also be used in these sessions. These modalities could be used individually or in combination.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness involves intentionally paying attention to the present moment, often through breath, body awareness, or noticing thoughts and feelings in a non-judgemental way. In sessions, this may include short, guided practices, grounding techniques, or mindful reflection during art making or movement. You don't need to be able to meditate to practice mindfulness. They are different. Mindfulness accepts that the mind can wander and uses the wandering as an opportunity to bring your attention to the present moment. Mindfulness has been found to improve emotional regulation, reduce stress and anxiety, and support overall wellbeing.

Qigong

Qigong is a gentle, flowing movement practice from Chinese medicine. It combines breath, posture, and focused attention to support balance, the flow of energy (Qi) through the body, and emotional regulation. The movements are usually slow,

repetitive, and simple, with an emphasis on inner awareness and connection. Evidence shows qigong can reduce anxiety, improve mood, and support nervous system regulation and reconnect with the body in a safe, supported way. No previous experience is required.

Art Therapy

Art therapy uses creative expression to explore and express thoughts, feelings, and experiences. You do not need any art skills as the focus is on the process, rather than the product. A person-centred approach to art therapy means that you are the expert of your own experience. Your choices, insights, and pace guide the process, with support, and the art becomes a way for you to explore what feels meaningful and important to you. Creating art can help access parts of your experience that may be difficult to express in words. It can be particularly helpful in processing emotions, building self-understanding, and viewing a situation from a different perspective.

Confidentiality

Group discussions and reflections are part of the program. Please keep what other participants share confidential. The facilitator may break confidentiality only if there is concern for your safety, the safety of others, or if legally required. There is to be no recording of sessions or photographs taken. As outside sessions take place on public land, complete privacy cannot be guaranteed.

Potential Risks

Exploring emotions through mindfulness practices may bring up unexpected feelings. Group settings may involve sharing personal experiences, which could feel vulnerable. If you feel uncomfortable, you are free to step back or take a break. If you experience distress, the facilitator will provide support within the scope of this program. If additional support is needed, referrals to professional services can be provided.

Physical Activity Disclaimer

Qigong and mindful walking are gentle movement practices. Only participate to a level that feels safe and comfortable for you. If you have medical conditions or concerns about physical activity, consult your healthcare provider before participating. There is a risk of falling when walking on uneven ground in natural settings. You are responsible for ensuring a safe environment and monitoring your own wellbeing during movement.

Health & Safety

All health and safety measures will be in keeping with current DFFH and Covid19 related guidelines. If you have any symptoms, are awaiting a COVID-19 test results, or have been in close contact with a known COVID-19 case, please refrain from attending and arrange another time. Maintain social distance during activities or you may wear a face mask if you choose to.

Fees

The fee charged for a group program is stated on the website and is payable at the time of the booking via credit card. Please discuss with your facilitator if you require an alternative payment option. Group registration can be cancelled up to 48 hours before the first session. After that time, the group fee is non-refundable.

In an emergency

Practitioners at Pathways Creative Therapies do not provide a crisis service. If there is an emergency, please contact: your doctor; or the emergency section of your local hospital; or Lifeline on 13 11 14; or the Mental Health Triage Service on 13 14 65.

Consent and Participation

Participation in these sessions is voluntary, and you can choose which elements feel right for you. You are welcome to pause, stop, or change direction at any time. Your wellbeing is central, and your feedback helps shape the process. Participation in this group program is only for those over the age of 18. These services are not intended as a substitute for mental health treatment or medical care.