

same. Change, rather than no change, is what's permanent in life. We can't cling to the past, to the way things used to be—or to how we used to look. Following this ancient tradition, mindful beauty encourages us to see ourselves as we really are and disengage from negative self-talk that comes from living in a society focused on youth and body image. With the mindful beauty meditations you'll discover in this book, you'll be encouraged to get in touch with the real you, beyond your self-image, and the beauty within. It will help you accept and embrace the ever-changing you. It will change how you see yourself.

Mindfulness can help us to recognize the warning signs of anxious or depressive thinking so we're able to deal with them better. Imagine visiting with a friend who is a bit down. You wouldn't scold them for being sad or enforce a vigorous cheering up. You'd treat them kindly and accept them as they are at that moment. You'd give them a hug, hold their hand, or sit quietly by their side. You'd be there for them. Mindfulness teaches us to become that kind friend to ourselves. Being there for yourself takes practice. Mindful beauty offers a way to learn and practice this self-caring skill by bringing us back to gentle daily routines that can nurture us right now.

Mindfulness has also been incorporated into psychological treatments for depression as part of Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) and incorporated as part of mental health treatments in the United States and the United Kingdom. Mindfulness meditations have been found to prevent the return of depressive episodes. It teaches how to focus on the present, rather than worrying about the future or dwelling un-

happily on the past. It helps us not to ruminate, to go over and over (and over) problems in our minds. Rumination can be exhausting. It leads us nowhere, except around and around in ever-decreasing circles. Mindfulness is gentle. It doesn't add a scolding voice, an avoidant mental maneuver, or a denial of how you feel. It helps those who are anxious and distressed accept their experiences as they are. By focusing on our bodies, on our physical sensations, such as breathing, or by mindfully engaging in soothing tasks, it helps us to come back to the present, to slow down and experience our feelings and to accept them, instead of getting stuck in a racing, downward spiral of negative thoughts.

MBCT has been scientifically tested and is particularly effective with regard to depressive relapse. This is particularly helpful because if you've struggled with depression at any time in your life, it may return at some stage. By learning some simple mindful strategies and making them part of your daily life, you can engage in some beneficial preventative mental health care. Prevention is always better than trying to cure.

Mindfulness has other benefits. It helps you get into flow with your stream of consciousness (a phrase coined by William James, the "father of psychology"). The stream of consciousness is the flow of our thoughts. Being in flow is linked to creativity. In our experience, and in those of many others, mindfulness increases creativity. Evidence is being gathered in this exciting area of research. Mindfulness helps you to dive deep into your creative well and to learn to rest while constantly moving in the current of life.