

Watford Bridge, UK Peace Conversations on Wellbeing and Mindfulness

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Last year in 2017, The Watford Bridge of Peace hosted an information afternoon on 'Mental Health Today'. Professional speakers gave us some comprehensive facts on the topic and also links to very useful help lines. Following the success of that meeting we decided to continue with the same issue and explore methods to keep good mental health in our daily life.

This year, the unusual snowy weather on March 18th 2018 made it harder for people to attend, still around 20 brave souls came to the meeting at the Multi Cultural Community Centre in Watford. Our main guest speaker, Gillian Heath, Governor at a local primary and nursery school, spoke on how the school had successfully adopted 'Mindfulness' which had greatly improved its pupils behaviour and concentration. The school had received an award for its significant undertaking and had inspired other schools to follow their example.



Gill gave us a brief description of 'Mindfulness' as the practice of being aware of our body, mind, and feelings in the present moment leading to a sensation of calm and self-control. Mindfulness has been increasingly adopted in the NHS as a means to alleviate feelings of anxiety and depression in mental health patients. Gill gave us some examples of the practice used at her school: the children are asked to sit straight on their chair feeling their feet on the ground and their bum on the chair, they massage each other's backs, they run one mile around the playground, they visualise throwing in a suitcase all their worries

and negative feelings and then they closing the suitcases, they are asked to breathe in deeply and then get the air out in 2 quick puffs. The children cooperate well and enjoy the activities and it helps them to perform better in school. Gill then guided us in some 'Mindfulness' exercises which made us all feel quite relaxed.



After a short break tasting the various snacks brought by everyone, we came back together to share our thoughts and comments on the afternoon topic. We were all inspired by Gill's talk and the great potential and hope in applying 'Mindfulness' in schools. We then discussed how we deal with anger and negative emotions ourselves, how we recognize the signs and check our thoughts to prevent them from getting out of control. We recognised the value of 'Mindfulness' and its positive influence on people's lives. We also explored other methods which follow a similar objective of self-control like Yoga and Tai Chi. One of the participants also mentioned that, besides finding balance and calm in ourselves, serving and helping others likewise produces a positive energy which gives us a sense of satisfaction and wellbeing.

We concluded the afternoon with a demonstration of Tai Chi, an [internal Chinese martial art](#) practiced for both its defence training and its health benefits. Zhijun King guided us through some initial moves which we all enjoyed very much. We had a wonderful and meaningful afternoon.

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