Explanation of Retreat Outcomes:

OUTCOME 1

This retreat teaches cognitive strategies or tools that can be applied in day to day living. These specific tools employed in achieving an understanding of the true nature and purpose of life with its’ many challenges are firmly grounded in 12th century Nichiren Buddhist Mindfulness practice.

This kind of Mindfulness provides a significantly different approach to ‘observing of mind’ from an internal observer position when compared to other Mindfulness practices. For instance psychological Mindfulness interventions in clinical settings are traditionally based on adopted Zen Buddhist practice which basically involves the stopping or slowing of discursive thoughts in order to allow a practitioner’s deeper nature to come to the fore and thus harmonize mind with the ‘true self’. As such the aim is to simply ‘settle the mind’ but what the ‘observer’ or the ‘true self’ actually is, is not defined.

In comparison, in addition to slowing ruminating thoughts down, Nichiren Buddhist Mindfulness teaches a technique that allows the practitioner to redirect thoughts onto the true nature of one’s mind in order to reassess and restructure incompatible thoughts or actions based on the wisdom that derives from an understanding of the true nature of existence, called ‘ichinen sanzen’ which in Buddhist terms is equivalent to ‘enlightenment’. We will explore and embrace this concept of ‘true self’ and ‘observer’ as part of our training.

In essence, Nichiren Buddhism is based on the belief that human perception and consequent behavior is governed by:

1. The law of cause and effect (i.e. we will experience that which we co-create, individually, collectively, consciously or unconsciously)
2. The law of energy conservation (i.e. energy cannot be destroyed and is therefore infinite, it is in constant flux and therefore we possess to transform
3. Dependent origination (i.e. interconnection and therefore interdependence of all things)

Holding this understanding in mind by utilizing a specific method of focus and practice one is able to gain the ability to bring his or her life into perspective and into consistent alignment.

The method of mantra meditation is regarded as an expansion in mindfulness practice in Buddhism. There are many studies documented that have highlighted the positive effects of mindfulness meditation for depression, anxiety and stress ([Finucane & Mercer, 2006](#_ENREF_1); [Grossman, Niemann, Schmidt, & Walach, 2004](#_ENREF_2)).

OUTCOME 2

Further to the primary practice of Mindfulness identified above, we will also introduce a secondary practice which is proven to be an effective cognitive strategy in the elimination of stress, anxiety and other mental or physiological disorders. Hypnosis, hypnotherapy or guided imagery under which name it is also known, has shown to be very effective in addressing a variety of challenging issues in people ([Gruzelier, 2002](#_ENREF_3); [Kirsch, Montgomery, & Sapirstein, 1995](#_ENREF_4); [Lynn, Fassler, & Knox, 2005](#_ENREF_5); [Whitehouse et al., 1996](#_ENREF_6)).

We will explain the uses of a general hypnotherapeutic technique that can be applied for deep relaxation, stress management and a number of other issues. After first experiencing the relaxing and beneficial effects of hypnosis for yourself, participants working in mental health will be able to use this technique with their clients as complete instructions and script will be provided.

OUTCOME 3

Before attending the retreat you will be asked to complete a psychoanalytic as well as behavioral self-report type assessment aiming to identify the issues or challenges you are experiencing and which you may or may not want to address from here on with some of the strategies you will be experiencing on retreat. Thus, you will have the opportunity to complete the self-report assessment prior to commencement of retreat and there is no need for you to share any of the information that you produce (unless you want to do so of course).It is for your personal use. As mentioned, the assessment is designed to guide you through a number of questions that help you define the kind of changes you wish to make.

The self-report tool can also be used with clients by those actively working in mental health.

OUTCOME 4

The overall outcome of the retreat can be summarized as follows:

It is our aim to provide psycho-educational training utilizing cognitive strategies found in Nichiren Buddhist Mindfulness and Hypnosis for both, mental health practitioners and those who are simply wishing to experience the effects of such techniques and take them home for continuous self-improvement.

References

Finucane, A., & Mercer, S. (2006). An exploratory mixed methods study of the acceptability and effectiveness of mindfulness -based cognitive therapy for patients with active depression and anxiety in primary care. *BMC Psychiatry, 6*(1), 14.

Grossman, P., Niemann, L., Schmidt, S., & Walach, H. (2004). Mindfulness-based stress reduction and health benefits: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research, 57*(1), 35-43.

Gruzelier, J. H. (2002). A review of the impact of hypnosis, relaxation, guided imagery and individual differences on aspects of immunity and health. *Stress, 5*(2), 147-163.

Kirsch, I., Montgomery, G., & Sapirstein, G. (1995). Hypnosis as an Adjunct to Cognitive-Behavioral Psychotherapy: A Meta-analysis. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology 63*((2)), 214-220.

Lynn, S. J., Fassler, O., & Knox, J. (2005). Hypnosis and the altered state debate: something more or nothing more? *Contemporary Hypnosis, 22*(1), 39-45.

Whitehouse, W. G., Dinges, D. F., Orne, E. C., Keller, S. E., Bates, B. L., Bauer, N. K., et al. (1996). Psychosocial and immune effects of self-hypnosis training for stress management throughout the first semester of medical school. *Psychosom Med, 58*(3), 249-263.