

PREFACE

This book looks back at the first ten years of the “Mindfulness and Meditation in a University Context”, from March 2010 to March 2020. It outlines the motives for establishing such a program at universities, as well as its structure and implementation.

Since the Munich Model’s launch in 2010, with a meditation course for fifteen students from the Social Work degree course at Munich’s University of Applied Sciences, the program has been continuously expanded. Since then, more than 150 students from 21 courses of study have taken part in the program each semester.

While the Munich Model now includes both theory and practice for students, as well as additional offerings for teachers and university employees, this book will focus primarily on the voices of students who have participated in these courses. Through their meditation journals, they share the experiences they have during mindfulness and meditation practice and also how these practices have influenced their studies and their daily lives.

The original intent was to archive these meditation journals, kept as a record of participation. As the idea for this book project developed, the idea arose that some selected entries should be published, as these indicate the impact mindfulness and meditation approaches have on students in the context of their lives as students at university.

Of the 2000 students who have taken part in the courses so far, some one hundred were contacted and asked whether they would agree to the publication of their journal entries. Naturally these excerpts were kept anonymous. The students who wrote back all agreed to have their entries published as they considered the project to be “important”, “super”, and “ingenious”. This has brought the book very much to life. The book also serves as a kind of “workbook” that can be applied for personal use, yet also aims to be a stimulus and an example for how the topic “Mindfulness and Meditation” can be successfully implemented at universities and other educational institutions.

“All beginnings are difficult”, as a German proverb goes – which means that new situations or challenges are often tricky at the outset. This may be true, but one could also say: all beginnings are exciting, inspiring, and exhilarating. Perhaps one should therefore stick to Confucius, who is reported to have said: “Even the longest journey begins with the first step.” So as soon as one takes this first step or the first few steps, much often unfolds “as if by itself”: one meets the right people at the right time, who contribute their skills. The required premises are found, materials and, thanks to convincing arguments, funds are released. The Munich Model has developed in precisely this way over the years.

Since its inception, 75 students have chosen “Mindfulness and Meditation” as the theme of their final theses – each focusing on a different topic related to their respective course of study, such as social work, school pedagogy, nursing or early childhood education. This speaks to the students’ great interest. Moreover, many of these former students now carry out mindfulness and meditation projects through activities in their professional fields. Some of them have even become lecturers themselves and have recently begun teaching courses within the framework of the Munich Model.

There are today numerous national and international approaches to anchoring mindfulness and meditation in the educational system. The Munich Model serves as an example for how comprehensive implementation of such a program can succeed at universities.

