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**Press Release**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **People with Depression Find Relief in Mindfulness Training During Pandemic**

ST. JOHN'S, NL September 3, 2020 – Women and men with depression who participated in a pilot mindfulness training program based in St. John's completed it with significantly lower levels of anxiety and depression symptoms, and significantly higher levels of mindfulness and psychological well-being.

Researchers Amanda Hancock, PhD Candidate, Faculty of Business Administration, Memorial University and Megan Walsh, Assistant Professor, Edwards School of Business, University of Saskatchewan, analyzed the evaluation data, which, they reported, “showed that participants felt the training was very effective.”

Canadian Mental Health Association—Newfoundland and Labrador and Safer Mindfulness Inc. partnered to offer the “Mindfulness for Depression” program between mid-April and mid-June 2020. Starting a month after the lockdown began, the 1.5-hour weekly sessions met virtually over 10 weeks through Zoom For Healthcare, participating from St. John's and surroundings, Central, West coast, and Nova Scotia. An average of 19 attended the weekly evening sessions.

“This group was highly engaged,” says Andrew Safer, Founder, Safer Mindfulness Inc., who developed the program and presented the sessions.

“There was the highest retention rate of any group in memory. Judging from what

they shared during the sessions and the evaluation outcomes, they walked away with a good understanding of mindfulness and mental health, and a set of practices that can help them in all sorts of situations.”

Participants expressed appreciation for the “tool” they received (mindfulness meditation and mindfulness in everyday life practices) to manage their illness and symptoms (eg., sadness, anxiety, sleeplessness, self-loathing, reactivity), and the fact that it is accessible to them 24/7. Asked if the workshop series helped them cope with the pandemic, 16 replied “Yes”, and 3 replied “No”, and if their friends could benefit from learning about mindfulness, all 19 replied “Yes.”

“Increasing our knowledge surrounding mental illness and learning a variety of coping skills can help improve mental health. As the evaluation data shows, participants of this program were able to learn and practice tools that supported their mental health during the height of uncertainty in a global pandemic,” says John G. Abbott, CMHA-NL CEO. “CMHA-NL is pleased to have partnered with Safer Mindfulness on this valuable program and we look forward to future collaborations as we continue to meet the mental health education needs of the communities we serve.”

Funding support for “Mindfulness for Depression” was provided by the Department of Health and Community Services, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and Pennecon Limited.

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### **About Safer Mindfulness**

Safer Mindfulness provides mindfulness instruction and training through multi-week programs such as “Mindfulness for Depression”. The focus is on mental health and addictions, and the workplace. Andrew Safer has 52 years’ experience as a mindfulness practitioner, and was authorized as a mindfulness

meditation instructor by Shambhala International of Halifax in 1993. His book, *Anxiety, Stress & Mindfulness: A Do-It-Yourself Guide to Wellness*, was published by 2<sup>nd</sup> Tier Publishing in 2018. For more information, please visit [www.safermindfulness.com](http://www.safermindfulness.com) and our Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/safermindfulness>

### **About Canadian Mental Health Association - NL Division**

Canadian Mental Health Association, Newfoundland and Labrador Division (CMHA-NL), is a provincial division of CMHA, the nation-wide leader and champion for mental health. CMHA-NL's mission is to facilitate access to the resources people require to maintain and improve mental health and community integration, build resilience, and support recovery from mental illness. CMHA-NL is a not-for-profit organization that serves the public through mental health education, training, and intensive case management programs, like the Justice Program. For more information, please visit our website at [www.cmhanl.ca](http://www.cmhanl.ca) or connect with us on Instagram at [www.instagram.com/cmhanl/](http://www.instagram.com/cmhanl/).

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