An insider perspective of participants’ experiences of the benefits and barriers to attending Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy reunion meetings, following completion of their programmes: An interpretative phenomenological analysis.

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Declaration

I certify that all materials in this dissertation that is not my own work, has been identified and
properly attributed, and that no material is included for which a degree has previously been
conferred upon me.

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Abstract

**Background:** Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) is a promising approach aimed at the prevention of relapse in people suffering from recurrent depression. Little is known regarding the way that MBCT works and less is known in terms of how any gains from this intervention continue to be maintained in the longer term, and what factors may be supportive of this.

**Aim:** This study examines participants’ experiences of perceived benefits and barriers to MBCT reunion attendance following completion of MBCT.

**Method:** Thirteen people, who had participated in MBCT classes for recurrent depression within a primary care setting, were interviewed using a semi-structured interview schedule. Seven of these had completed their programme within the previous 12 to 18 months at the time of interview, and six had completed their programme between 20 months and 4 years prior to the time of the interview. The focus of the interviews was on participants’ reflections on their experiences of the reunion meetings or their reasons for not attending. Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) was used to analyse participants’ accounts.

**Results and conclusions:** Four themes highlighted the participants’ experiences: In terms of benefits, reunion attendees experienced the reunions as a “booster” reminding them of their mindfulness practices and as a “sanctuary” where these practices were further nurtured within an accepting and compassionate environment. Barriers to reunion attendance were expressed as a difficulty with the group experience and the feeling of some participants to want to put the experience behind them. The theoretical, clinical and research implications are discussed.

**Keywords:** Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT), qualitative, interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), depression, relapse prevention, MBCT reunion attendance.