

# Clinical Applications of Mindfulness-Enhanced Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for OCD

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&

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Anxiety and Depression Association of America Annual Conference 2015,  
Miami (where Dexter lives)

# Disclosures

- Nothing to disclose

# WHY?

- Mindfulness in ACT, MBSR, and a la carte
- Varied definitions of the word “mindfulness”
- Need specifics for when and how to apply to uncertainty tolerance and OCD

# Mindfulness

- Paying attention to the present moment
- Non-judgmental observation of internal experiences
- Letting go of resistance to discomfort

# Core Elements of CBT

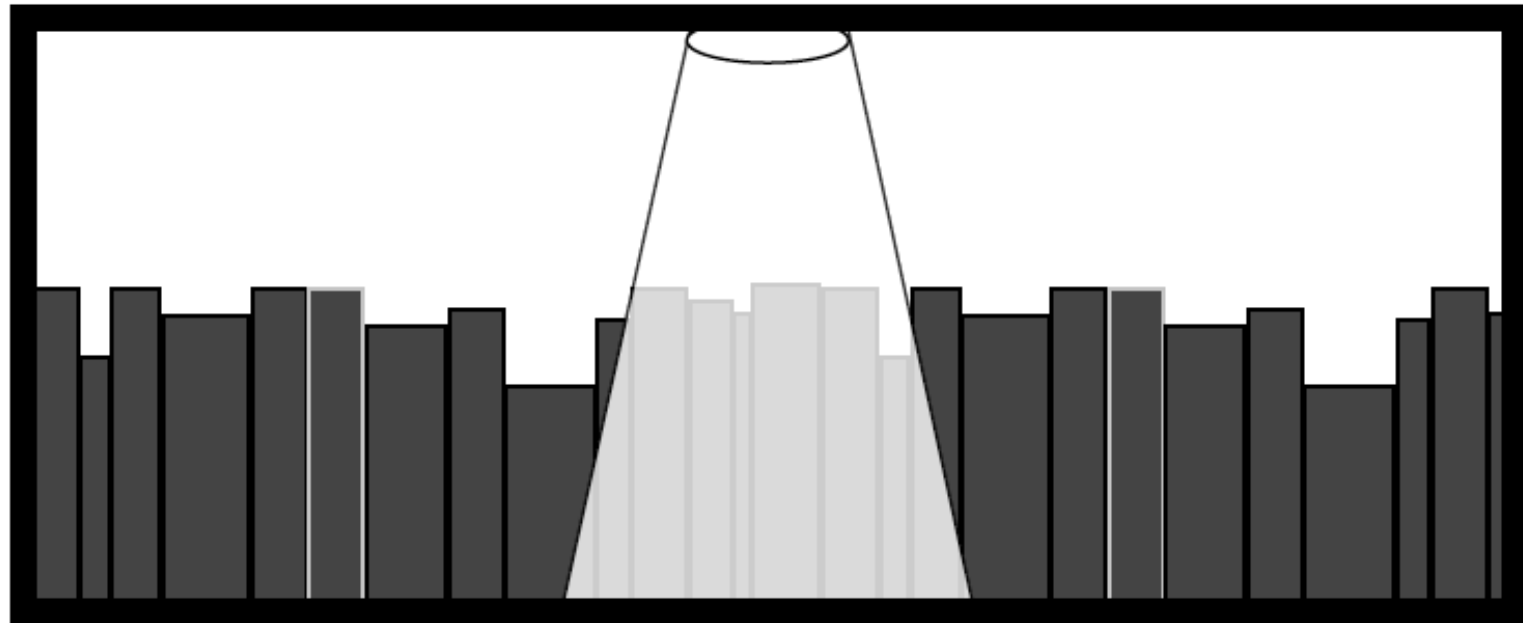
- Psycho-education on the disorder and its treatment conceptualization
- Cognitive restructuring – challenging distorted thought processes
- Behavioral therapy – exposure with response prevention (ERP)

# Psychoeducation and Mindfulness

- Why do I think this way?
- Do other people have these thoughts?
- What if these thoughts mean something important?

# The spotlight

The Average Mind



↑  
Desirable  
Fringe  
Thoughts

↑  
Desirable  
Interesting  
Thoughts

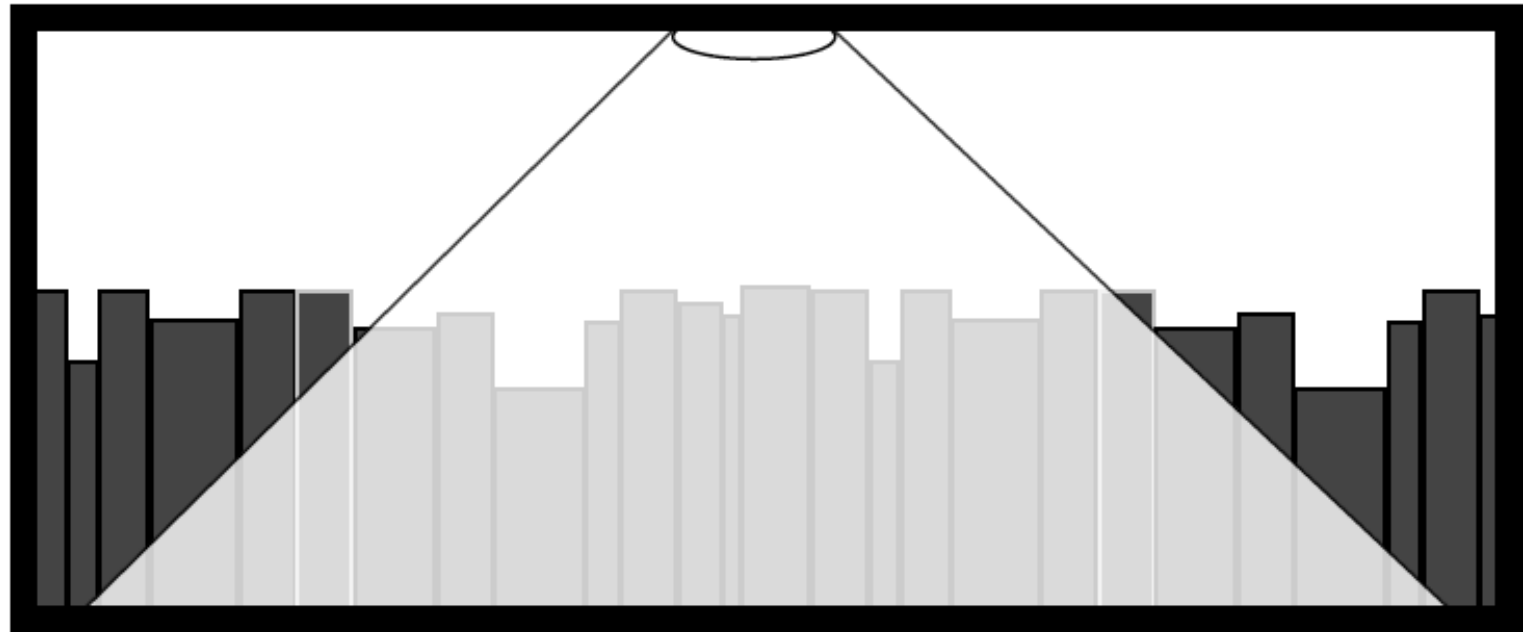
↑  
Everyday  
Thoughts

↑  
Undesirable  
Interesting  
Thoughts

↑  
Undesirable  
Fringe  
Thoughts

# The spotlight

The OCD Mind



↑  
Desirable  
Fringe  
Thoughts

↑  
Desirable  
Interesting  
Thoughts

↑  
Everyday  
Thoughts

↑  
Undesirable  
Interesting  
Thoughts

↑  
Undesirable  
Fringe  
Thoughts



# Thoughts as mental events

- Thoughts are thoughts, not threats (not “*JUST* a thought” – which implies value)
- Value is unknown, not intrinsic
- To be acknowledged, observed
- Be curious about them, not avoidant

# Feelings as raw data

- Feelings are feelings, not facts
- Not evidence, significance is unknown
- Appraisals of physical sensations
- To be experienced in the moment, not sought after or checked for
- Pain (a present experience) vs. suffering (same experience plus resistance)

# Physical sensations as nerves firing

- Not mandates to act
- Also not evidence, personal significance uncertain (i.e. groinal response as fear or arousal)
- Cause unknown
- To be experienced, not explained unless medically impairing

# Mindfulness and cognitive restructuring

- Changing what-if to what-IS (attention to presence of thought, not content appraisal)
- Not neutralizing or reassuring
- Aim to discourage compulsions, not get certainty

# Common distortions and reframes

- Black-and-white
- I am dirty
- I am uncomfortable because my finger touched something and I don't know what was on it

# Common distortions and reframes

- Catastrophizing
- I'm might get AIDS and die
- This is a typical thought for me when I see a cut. I can't predict the future.

# Common distortions and reframes

- Emotional reasoning
- I feel gay, I must be in denial
- Things I obsess about make my heart rate go up and when I check my groin I notice sensations

# Common distortions and reframes

- Mind reading
- The conference attendees think I'm an idiot
- I don't know what they're thinking. I often assume people are thinking negative things about me.



# Other distortions

- Disqualifying the positive
- Magical thinking
- Selective abstraction
- Personalizing
- Should/must statements
- Magnifying

# Mindfulness and ERP

- Exposure with Response Prevention (ERP)
- Gradually making contact with feared stimuli while resisting urges to compulsively neutralize or reassure
- Mindfulness = ERP to being in the presence of unwanted thoughts/feelings without engaging in rituals

# ERP Goals

- Bring the unwanted thought or feeling into the present moment
- Stay with the discomfort associated with uncertainty about the thought/feeling
- Resist the urge to avoid or change this discomfort
- Willingness to cope with all possible outcomes because there's no other choice

# Meditation and OCD

- Asking an OCD sufferer to clear their mind is counterproductive – do not clear, notice busy
- 10,000 hands pulling you away from your anchor – meditation may seem impossible, empathize
- Performance evaluation, more effort = less success
- The point is to exercise the muscle that allows you to come back from an obsession, from the “*what IF*” to the “*what IS*”, not to relax

# Mindful Meditation Goals

- Allow unwanted thoughts and feelings to be present when they occur
- Acknowledge the associated discomfort
- Observe (not react to) urges to avoid or change the discomfort

# When Mindfulness Attacks

- Thoughts are “just” thoughts is a judgment
- “It’s not me, it’s my OCD” vs. “It is me and so be it.” – the problem with relabeling/reattributing
- Perfectionism and the solving ritual
- Checking the present
- Meditation as a compulsion

# Encouraging Mindful Self-Talk

- “Hey, look at that...”
- “Duly noted...”
- “Good one, OCD!”
- Accepting the presence of the typical “...aaand right on schedule”
- “That’s just how I think.”

# emails

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