The Role of Mindfulness in the Treatment of Anxiety Disorders

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What do the Dalai Lama, Aaron Beck and Sigmund Freud Share in Common?
I asked my sister to look after my son so that my husband and I could go out for dinner.

She said no. She said I should spend more time with him now that I am back from the hospital.

I am a bad mother.
Learning how to Regulate Distressing Emotions is Aided by…

Insight
Metacognition
Habituation
Mindfulness
Mentalization
Behavioral Rehearsal
What is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness is a type of awareness that is developed by paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and without judgment.

Like any skill it takes practice.

Accesses the present moment, thereby clarifying the range of choices that are available to you.
THE MINDFUL REVOLUTION

The science of finding focus in a stressed-out, multitasking culture

BY KATE PICKERT
Training Once Offered in Monasteries Is Now Increasingly Available In Health and Mental Health Care

Eating Mindfully
Scanning the Body
Mindful Walking or Stretching
Mindfulness of the Breath
Mindfulness of Thoughts
Anxiety Disorders: Episodic and Recurrent
What Is Required to Help Patients Become their Own Therapists?

Hollon, et al., 2005
M-CBT vs. Assess Only in Responders to Panic Treatment

White et al., 2012
Semantic memory representation of sensations and their associations following a panic attack
Each additional panic attack strengthens these links
Retriggering of a Fear Network Can Inhibit Alternative Information From Coming to Mind
Treatment Should Preempt Fear Network Activation in the Presence of Eliciting Cues

Anxiety Sensitivity and Interoceptive Exposure (Boswell et al., 2013).
Third Wave Anxiety Treatments: Hayes, 2005; Orsillo & Roemer, 2011; Mennin & Fresco, 2013

- Understand your fear
- How is anxiety getting in your way?
- Changing your relationship to anxiety
- The Attentional Skills of Mindfulness
- Befriending your emotions
- Not controlling your internal experience
- Taking care of yourself
- Commitment beyond therapy termination
Mindfulness Meditation Trains 2 Types of Attention (Lutz et al., 2008)

**Focal Attention**
- Directing attention on a chosen object.
- Detecting mind wandering.

**Open Monitoring**
- No explicit focus on objects of awareness.
- Non-evaluative labeling of experience.
Gradient of Attentional Focus in Mindfulness Training

Tangible

- Mindful Eating
- Body Scan
- Mindful Walking or Stretching
- Sitting with the Breath
- Sitting with Sounds
- Sitting with Thoughts
- Sitting with a Difficulty

Intangible
Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy and Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction

8 weekly group sessions
2 Hours per session, 8-12 participants
Common diagnostic composition – depression / anxiety
Benefits Depend on Home Practice Between Group Sessions

Session 1  Automatic Pilot
• 40 minute Body Scan
• Mindfulness of a routine activity

Session 2  Dealing with Barriers
• 40 minute Body Scan
• Mindfulness of a routine activity

Session 3  The Breath
• 40 minute mindfulness of Breath / or mindful stretching/Yoga
• 3 minute breathing space

Session 4  Staying Present
• 40 minute mindfulness of emotion / or mindful walking
• 3 minute breathing space

Session 5  Allowing/Letting Be
• 40 minute mindfulness of difficult emotions
• 3 minute coping breathing space

Session 6  Thoughts Are Not Facts
• 40 minute mindfulness of difficult emotions
• 3 minute coping breathing space

Session 7  Best Take Care of Myself
• 40 minute practice of your choice
• 3 minute coping breathing space

Session 8  Using What’s Been Learned
• The rest of your life
Three Minute Breathing Space
Pre-Post Effect Size Estimates in Mindfulness Based Treatments – Anxiety

Funnel plot of precision by Hedges’s g for Anxiety measures = .63
(Hofmann et al., 2010)
Mindfulness Based Interventions Do Not Outperform CBT

- Arch et al., 2013
- Hoge et al., 2013
- Koszycki, 2007
- Vøllestad, 2011
- Piet et al., 2010
Sequencing Mindfulness and Cognitive Behavioural Treatments
Sequencing Mindfulness and Cognitive Behavioural Treatments
Greater reduction in negative emotion for mindfulness vs. aerobic exercise in social anxiety disorder

Goldin et al., 2013
Trier Social Stress Test: Reductions greater in mindfulness trained patients vs. controls

Britton et al., 2012
The ‘Present-Moment’ Pathway

(Craig, 2004)

(Craig, 2009)
Attending to the Breath

Breath Monitoring
(masking out exec function areas)

Breath Monitoring Changes
Mindfulness Trained > Waitlisted Controls

Right insula is uniquely related to Mindfulness Training

Farb et al., Cerebral Cortex, 2012

Farb et al., SCAN, 2013
Functional connectivity between the right amygdala and frontal cortex increases from pre- to post-treatment for GAD patients in MBSR but not Stress Education (Holzel et al., 2013)
Conclusions

• Rationale for training in mindfulness is to enhance emotion regulation

• Interoceptive exposure, distress tolerance, hypoarousal are core elements

• Sequenced with standard anxiety treatments

• Benefits depend upon continued practice

• Neural evidence of increased activation in viscerosomatic regions and frontal modulation of fear processing