Harnessing Mindfulness: Tailoring the Practice to the Person

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Therapeutic Mindfulness

1. Awareness
2. Of present experience
3. With acceptance

The Roles of Mindfulness

- Practicing Therapist
  - Relates mindfully to patients regardless of therapeutic intervention
- Mindfulness Informed Psychotherapy
  - Insights from mindfulness practice inform treatment
- Mindfulness Based Psychotherapy
  - Teaches mindfulness practice to patients

Decisions, Decisions

1. Which skills to emphasize?
2. Formal or informal practice?
3. Which objects of attention?
4. Religious or secular practices?
5. Narrative or experiencing mode?
6. Relative or absolute truth?
7. Turning toward safety or sharp points?

Forms of Mindfulness Practice

Core Practice Skills

1. Concentration
2. Mindfulness per se
3. Acceptance and Compassion
Concentration vs. Mindfulness

• Concentration
  - Choose an object and follow it closely

• Mindfulness
  - Attend to whatever object rises to forefront of consciousness

Acceptance

Loving-kindness Practice

• “Metta” practices
  - May I be happy, peaceful, free from suffering
  - May my loved ones be happy...
  - May all beings be happy...

Continuum of Practice

Informal Mindfulness Practice

Formal Meditation Practice

Intensive Retreat Practice

Informal Practice

Taillight Meditation
Formal Practice
(Results May Vary)

- Data supports effects of formal meditation
- Structural and functional brain changes.

Intensive Retreat Practice

Objects of Attention

Coarse
- Feet touching ground
- Sights and sounds of nature
- Taste of food
- Sound of bell
- Breath in belly
- Mantra
- Air at tip of nose

Subtle

Religious or Secular?

- “Spiritual” practices
  - Devotional and theistic
- Secular practices
  - Science grounded
- Seek cultural consonance

Narrative Mode

- Psychodynamic
  - Earlier, transference, other relationships
- Behavioral
  - How learned, how reinforced
- Systemic
  - Maintained by family, community, culture

Experiencing Mode

- How is it felt in the body?
- How does the mind respond?
  - Grasping
  - Pushing away
  - Ignoring
Relative Truth

- Human story
  - Success & Failure
  - Pleasure & Pain
  - Longing
  - Hurt
  - Anger
  - Envy
  - Joy
  - Pride

Absolute Truth

- Anicca
  (impermanence)
- Dukkha
  (unsatisfactoriness)
- Anatta (no enduring, separate self)

Processing Trauma

1. Open to painful emotions
2. Explore the facts of trauma
3. See it through lens of dependent origination
4. Develop compassion

Timing is Everything

Turning toward Safety I

- Outer or distal focus
  - Walking Meditation
  - Listening Meditation
  - Nature Meditation
  - Eating Meditation
  - Open eye practices

Turning toward Safety II

- Inner focus
  - Guided Imagery
  - Metta Practice
  - DBT techniques
Turning Toward the Sharp Points

- Moving toward anything unwanted or avoided
- How is it experienced in the body?
  - Pain, fear, sadness, anger
  - Unwanted images or memories
  - Urges toward compulsive behaviors

Different Strokes

- Need for frequent adjustment of exercises
- Elicit feedback both during and after practice
- Titrate between Safety and Sharp Points

When Focusing on the Breath Can Be Harmful

- When overwhelmed by traumatic memories
- When frightened of disintegration, loss of sense of self
- When suffering from psychosis

Life Preservers

- Concentration Practices
  - Stepping out of the thought stream
- Eyes open, external sensory focus
  - Ground, trees, sky, wind, sounds

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For mindfulness & psychotherapy resources, visit: www.meditationandpsychotherapy.org

For tailored meditation practices, visit: www.mindfulness-solution.com

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