Adapting Mindfulness for Conservative Christian Clients

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Introduction
What Are We Going To Do?

• Mindfulness?
• Concerns?
• Ethics?
• Adaptations?
• Clinical aspects
Mindfulness Defined

Compassionate, purposeful awareness

• Open,
• Non-judgmental,
• Accepting of...
• Thoughts, feelings, impulses, and/or behaviors, in the present moment

• (Shapiro, Carlson, Astin, & Freedman, 2006)
Mindfulness Defined II

Open present-moment awareness

(Shapiro, Carlson, Astin, & Freedman, 2006)
Core Elements

• **Attention**: On purpose regulating attention to the current moment. This increases one’s perception of thoughts, emotions, sensations, and behaviors as they arise.

• **Attitude**: Maintaining a stance of openness, curiosity, and acceptance without self-judgment toward inner experience. Applying a non-judgmental attitude toward the self and others.

• **Intention**: Ask the question of why you are deciding to practice mindfulness. Find personal meaning in the exercise.

(Shapiro, Carlson, Astin, & Freedman, 2006)
Mindfulness as an Empirically Supported Treatment

- Lowered Stress and Overall Well-being (Goyal, Singh, Sapinga, et al., 2014)
- Lowered Anxiety and Depression: (Hofmann, Sawyer, Witt, & Oh, 2010)
- Lowered Anxiety and Stress: (Chiesa & Seretti, 2009)
- Enhanced Emotion Regulation: (Menezes, Pereira, & Bizarro, 2012)
Primary Christian Concerns

- Buddhist roots
MH Professional Ethical Aspects: Why respond to these concerns?

- Avoid value imposition
- Treat clients with multicultural sensitivity

Garzon & Ford (In Press)
Religiously Accommodative Treatment

• *Religiously accommodative treatment* seeks to increase therapeutic effectiveness through adapting or adjusting empirically supported interventions as needed to incorporate the worldview of the client respectfully in treatment (Tan, 2013).
Religiously Accommodative Treatment 2

• Decreases resistance

• Increases treatment adherence

• Increases homework compliance
Primary Concern: Buddhist Roots
Secular Mindfulness Worldview
Secular Mindfulness Breath Meditation Example
Christian-Adapted Breath Meditation
Christian Worldview Additions I

• God is with us in our present moment experience.

• Theological principle:
  – God’s immanence
TRUTH
Christian Worldview Additions 2

• God is relational with us in our present moment experience
Surrender as a Religious Coping Strategy

- Surrender to God is a religious coping strategy that focuses on actively yielding personal control of life stressors to God. It promotes a paradoxical experience of perceived control through acknowledging personal limitations in control over life stressors (Cole & Pargament, 1999; Wong-McDonald & Gorsuch, 2000).
Another Description of Surrender

• “Let go and let God” take control  
  (Tan, 2011)

• Not learned helplessness
Serenity Prayer as an Example of Healthy Surrender

• God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change [through yielding them to You], the courage to change the things I can [through Your strength], and the wisdom to know the difference.
• Are there other principles we can add to mindfulness?
Lovingkindness Meditation

- Seeks to cultivate...
  - Self-acceptance
  - Self-compassion
  - Compassion for others

Siegel (2010)
Secular Lovingkindness Meditation Script

• Start by repeating quietly to yourself, “May I be happy, may I be peaceful, may I be free from suffering.” Just repeat the phrase, intending or wishing this for yourself... Eventually your mind wanders... gently return your attention to the phrases, “May I be happy, may I be peaceful, may I be free from suffering”... once you’ve directed compassionate intentions towards yourself, you can try passing it on to others... It’s usually easiest to begin with someone who is a dear friend or relative... “May you be happy, may you be peaceful, may you be free from suffering.”

(Adapted from Siegel, 2010, pp. 84-85)
Adapted Lovingkindness Meditation Script

- See handout, Christian-Adapted Lovingkindness Meditation Version 1
Adapted LK Meditation Second Example

• See handout, Christian-adapted lovingkindness meditation version 2
Adapted Loving Kindness Meditation Differences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Secular LK</th>
<th>Adapted</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Intentions</td>
<td>• Prayer</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Sending well-wishes to the self</td>
<td>• Receiving God’s kindness towards us</td>
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<td>• Personal foundation</td>
<td>• Biblical, theological foundation</td>
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Grace

- Photo by Naypong. Published on 05 November 2014
  Stock photo - Image ID: 100296179
Grace includes

- God’s love
- God’s compassion
- God’s acceptance
- Self-acceptance
Teaching Clients Grace

- Scriptures (e.g., Romans)
- Books/audiobooks
  - Grace Walk by Steve McVey
  - Grace by Max Lucado
- Websites
  - https://gracewalk.org/
- Pastoral referrals
- Consultations
Lovingkindness Comparisons II

Secular LK Meditation

• Wishing, kind intentions

• Sending

• Decision for self-acceptance, compassion & other-compassion

Christian LK Meditation

• Prayer

• Receiving, interceding

• Receiving God’s grace, mercy, love, & acceptance for me through faith & giving it to others
Christian Classics on the Present Moment

- Abandonment to Divine Providence, Jean-Pierre de Caussade
- The Practice of the Presence of God, Brother Lawrence
- Letters by a Modern Mystic, Frank Laubach
- Present Perfect: Finding God in the Now, Gregory A. Boyd
Brief Christian-Adapted Mindfulness Strategies

• Breaking worry and rumination cycles
• Quick Christian-adapted Mindfulness Exercises (See handout)
Christian-Adapted Quick Exercises

- A
- B
- C
Adjustments

• Connect fully with...
  – ourselves
  – God

• in our present moment experience
Sample Questions & Background

• Lord, what are You doing around me right now?
• Lord, what is Your purpose for me in this present moment?
• Lord, what are You wanting to do in me in this moment? Around me?

— Abandonment to Divine Providence, Jean-Pierre de Caussade
Sample Questions & Background

- Lord, how can I express love to you in this present moment?
  - *The Practice of the Presence of God*, Brother Lawrence

- Or another question that works
- Collaborate with the client to choose the question that works for her
Handling Potential Client Reactions
During the Meditation

• Monitor client non-verbals
  – Posture shifts,
  – facial expression changes (tension increasing, frown, etc.)

• Check-in as appropriate
  – What’s happening right now for you?
Potential Reactions

- Positive
- Positive with some noting of inner criticisms
- Lots of inner criticisms
- A negative God image
  - “God hates me...is angry with me,” etc.
Addressing Reactions to Christian Lovingkindness Meditation

• Some inner criticisms or lots of inner criticisms
  – Immediacy
  – ACT cognitive defusion strategies
  – Exploring roots of self-judgment
  – Scriptures on God’s grace
Addressing Reactions to Christian Lovingkindness Meditation 2

• Negative God image (God hates me, is angry with me, etc.)
  – Parents, caregivers
  – Church environment
  – Scripture exploration, forgiveness, and meditation (God’s mercy, grace, love, etc.)
Diagnostic Reactions

• Panic-like reaction
  – Deep breaths
  – Reorienting to the room
  – Processing the experience to identify the underlying concern
Diagnostic Reactions 2

• PTSD abreaction/flashback
  – Rapidly reorient to the room
  – Invite the client to attend to external stimuli
    • Look at me. What are three other things you see in the room?
    • Touch your nose
    • Stand up, walk around, etc.
Key Points

• Ethical and clinical mandate for religiously accommodative treatment
• Adapting mindfulness to the Christian worldview is possible to make it more accommodative
Key Points 2

• Accommodations
  – God’s immanence (presence)
  – Surrender of control to God
  – Incorporating Biblical context for terms (Breath example)
  – Grace foundational for lovingkindness, and self-acceptance
Key Points 3

• Monitor the client during the meditation
• Ways to handle different client general reactions
• Ways to handle different client diagnostic reactions
Trust

Fear

Fear
Resources

• Christian mindfulness online course by Richard Johnston,

• http://www.christianmindfulness.co.uk/about.html
References


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