

How to Help Your Patients Overcome Anxiety with Mindfulness

Final Practical Tips

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National Institute for the Clinical
Application of Behavioral Medicine





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Final Practical Tips

Dr. Siegel: I hope you've enjoyed our course on Mindfulness for the Treatment of Anxiety.

I hope you've found it interesting and that you'll be able to apply some of the things that we've discussed in your own clinical work.

I have one request: in any way that you choose to apply these things, please trust your own clinical judgment first.

I'm often asked by people, "Where do I get trained as a mindfulness-oriented psychotherapist?"

"In any way that you choose to apply these things, trust your own clinical judgment first."

I usually say, "Don't. Get trained as a psychotherapist first. Get good supervision. Gather some clinical experience."

If I had a friend who I was sending to therapy, I'd much rather they see somebody who has a good, well-rounded understanding of psychopathology and a well-rounded understanding of psychotherapeutic techniques.

I'd rather see that person than somebody who has a lot of experience with mindfulness, but doesn't understand the clinical realm.

In all of the different techniques that I've suggested, it's really important to think of who needs what and when – that you use your own judgment and your own sense of your relationship with your client or patient as a guide to do that.

"Mindfulness helps us in so many ways as a therapist."

The other thing that I'd encourage you to do is practice mindfulness.

We haven't been talking about this as the main thrust of the course, but mindfulness helps us in so many ways as a therapist.

For one thing, it helps us to be attuned to whatever's happening interoceptively within ourselves.

The way that we experience empathy and the way that we connect to another person is essentially through mirror neurons; it's essentially me watching you have an experience – an emotional experience perhaps – and I feel that emotion or something like it in my own body.

By feeling that and being attuned to it, *I know what you are feeling, and I have a sense of connection to you.*

We know from study after study that it is precisely that capacity for connection – for empathic resonance – that is so important for successful outcomes in psychotherapy.

“Mindfulness practice can help you to think more clearly about what you’re doing as a clinician.”

My experience is that doing my own mindfulness practice goes a long way toward helping to train me to be able to be present and connected to the clients that I work with.

Finally, mindfulness practice can help you to think more clearly about what you’re doing as a clinician.

With mindfulness practice, we just don’t take our theories quite so seriously anymore.

If you’re used to watching thoughts come and go like clouds passing through the sky, it’s the same thing with psychodynamic theories – it’s the same thing with CBT techniques – it’s the same thing with existential or humanistic psychotherapy – it’s the same thing with our conceptualizations of medicines – these are just conceptualizations.

None of them has a firm handle on the truth.

And that can help us to be much more flexible in our work – not to mention happier ourselves – and to have an easier time managing our own anxiety.

So, with that, I wish you many, many mindful moments.