

Mindfulness & Compassion in Psychotherapy

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What is Mindfulness?

- *Sati* in Pali
 - Connotes *awareness, attention, & remembering*
- In therapeutic arena, also includes
 - Non-judgment
 - Loving acceptance
 - Adds kindness & friendliness

Therapeutic Mindfulness

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

Mind/essness

- Operating on “autopilot”
- Being lost in fantasies of the past and future
- Breaking or spilling things because we’re not paying attention
- Rushing through activities without attending to them

Life Is Difficult, for Everybody



The Problem With Selfing



The Roles of Mindfulness

Implicit



Explicit

- Practicing Therapist
- Mindfulness Informed Psychotherapy
- Mindfulness Based Psychotherapy

Mindfulness *Practice* is Not:

- Having a “blank” mind
- Becoming emotionless
- Withdrawing from life
- Seeking bliss
- Escaping pain

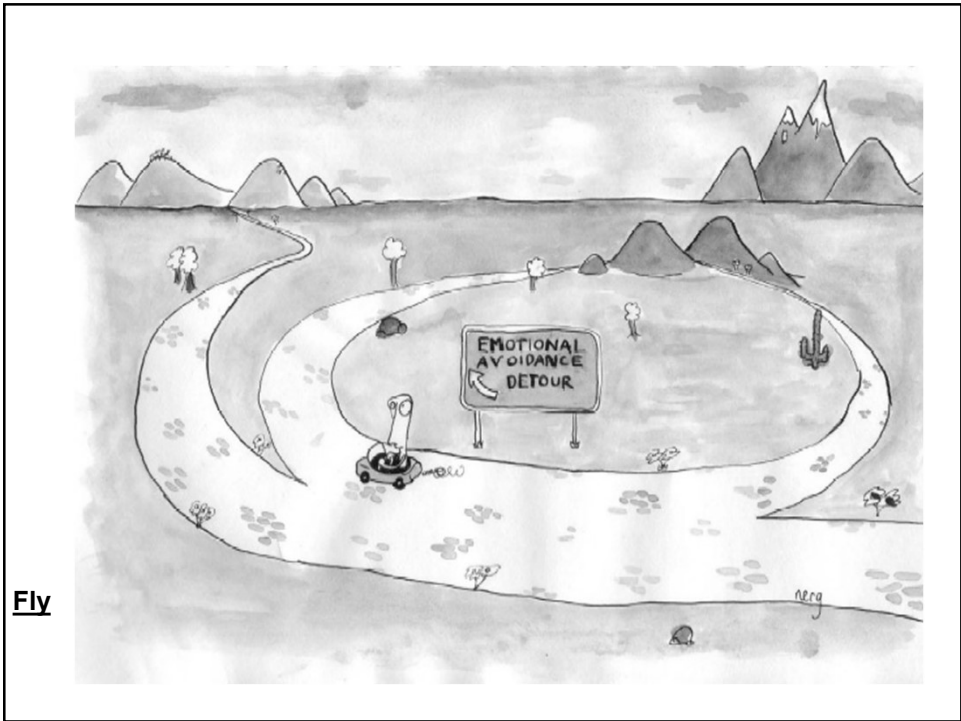
Mindfulness Can Help Us

- To see and accept things as they are
- To loosen our preoccupation with “self”
- To experience the richness of the moment
- To become free to act skillfully

Breath Awareness



How it Works

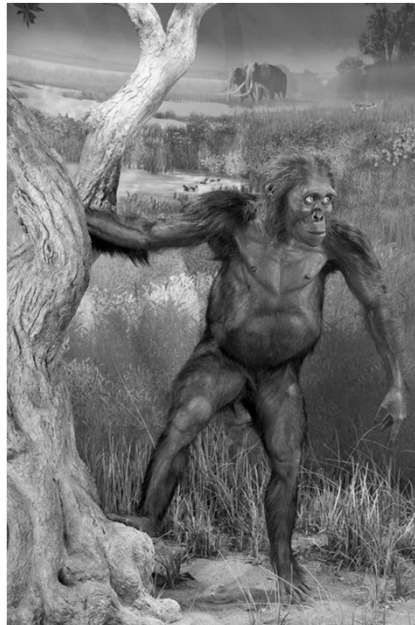


Overwhelmed?



Intensity of
experience

Capacity to
bear experience



The Thinking Disease

- Analyze past pleasure and pain
- Maximize future pleasure and avoid future pain



Fitting the Practice to the Person



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?

Core Practice Skills

1. Concentration (focused attention)
2. Mindfulness *per se* (open monitoring)
3. Acceptance and Compassion

Focused Attention vs. Open Monitoring

- Concentration (FA)
 - Choose an object and follow it closely
- Mindfulness (OM)
 - Attend to whatever object rises to forefront of consciousness



Loving Acceptance



Continuum of Practice

Informal Mindfulness Practice



Formal Meditation Practice



Intensive Retreat Practice

Telephone Meditation



Taillight Meditation



Shower Meditation



Formal Practice

(Results May Vary)

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



Intensive Retreat Practice



Resources at: meditationandpsychotherapy.org

Objects of Attention

Coarse



Subtle

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

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

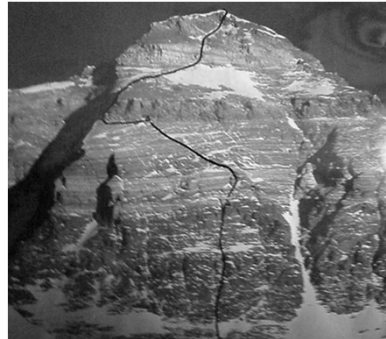
Turning toward Safety I

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



Turning toward Safety II

- Inner focus
 - Mountain Meditation
 - 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 about the experience
 - Both during and after practice
- Titrate between Safety and Sharp Points

When Mindfulness of Inner Experience Can Be Harmful

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



Alternate Techniques when Overwhelmed

- Eyes open, external sensory focus
 - Ground, trees, sky, wind, sounds
- Yoga practices to stretch and relax muscles

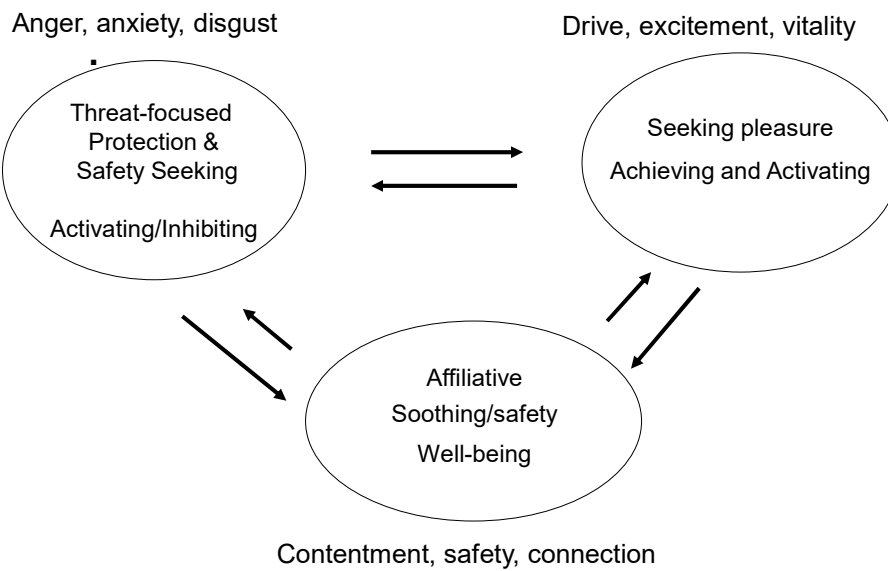


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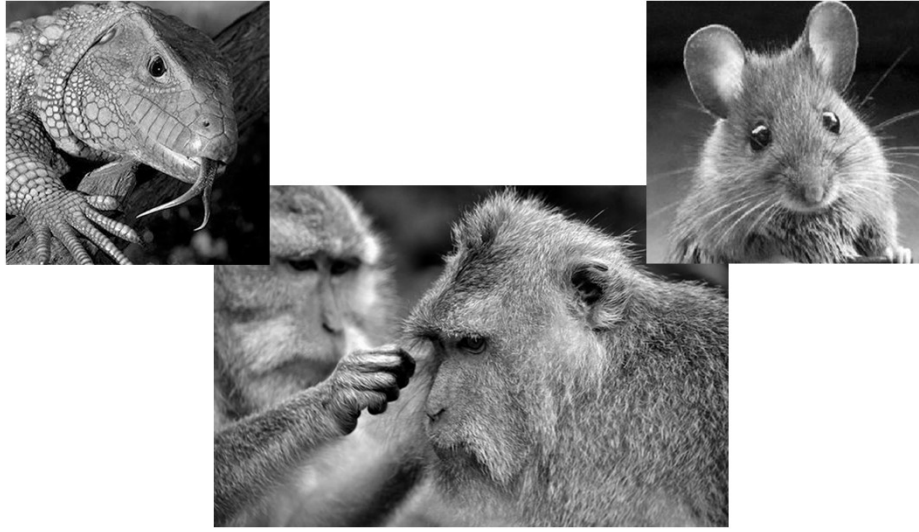
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Compassion in Psychotherapy

Motivational Systems



Safety, Satisfaction, Connection



Compassion

- Latin: *pati*; Greek: *pathein* (“to suffer”)
- Latin: *com* (“with”)

- Compassion means to “suffer with” another person.

Compassion's Relatives

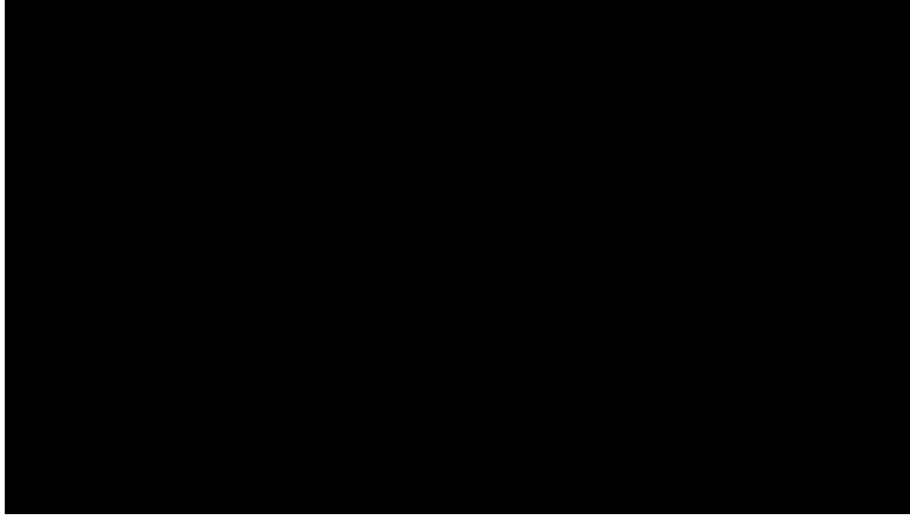
- Empathy
- Sympathy
- Love
- Pity
- Altruism

Lovingkindness Practice

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



Looking Through Another's Eyes



For tailored meditation practices, visit:

www.DrRonSiegel.com

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