How Do Mental Health Professionals Perceive and Describe the Process of Mindfulness in their Professional Practice

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In the Mental Health Professions people Have Been Talking About Mindfulness for 25 years but wait... what is it and how does it affect my professional practice?
Awareness that emerges through *Paying Attention on Purpose* in the *present moment* and *Non-Judgmentally* in the unfolding of experience moment by moment”

First entered the literature in 1990; Jon Kabat Zinn, 2003
Just a Particular Way of Paying Attention....
Can be **Learned and Practiced**, without appealing to ...any belief system or ideology ...its benefits are therefore accessible for anyone to test for him or herself.”

*Jon Kabat-Zinn, Full Catastrophe Living, 1990*
Mindfulness practice in the healing professions creates in us a State of Reflection and Emotional Availability, essential to the heart of Effective clinical work.

Mark Epstein (1999)
Self-regulation of Attention to the present moment, characterised by Concentration, Flexibility in Switching Attention and Deliberately Not Elaborating or Ruminating on Internal Experiences. An attitudinal approach characterised by Curious Awareness, Openness and Acceptance.

Bishop et. al (2004) 11 researcher study; U of T (6); Columbia; U of Calgary; U Mass & Palo Alto

*Focused on mindfulness in patients*
5 Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ)
1. Observing
2. Describing
3. Acting with Awareness
4. Non-judging
5. Non-reactivity to Inner Experience

Model of Mindfulness (Shapiro et al, 2006)

- Attention (focus and flexibility)
- Intention (eg emotional regulation)
- Attitude (open, curious, accepting)

Aspects not sequential but are engaged concurrently

**Goals of Mindful Practice**

**Mindful Practice**
- Attentive observation
- Critical curiosity
- Informed flexibility
- Presence

- Clinical reasoning
- Patient safety
- Compassion
- Technical skills
- Healing relationships
- Teamwork
- Physician well-being
Grady-Weliky et. al, Mindfulness Curriculum To foster:

Attentive **Observation**; Critical **Curiosity**;
Informed **Flexibility**; **Presence**;
Professional Development; Less errors;
Better Reporting; Caring attitudes toward patients; Health and well-being of professional; org culture.
Improve Active Listening, Reflective Practice, & Attentiveness
Offer Empathy if it is Felt
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mindful</th>
<th>Mindless</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Actively engaged in Present</td>
<td>Robots</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aware of Context and Multiple Perspectives</td>
<td>Stuck in a Rigid Perspective</td>
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<tr>
<td>Drawing new Distinctions</td>
<td>Rely on Distinctions made in the Past.</td>
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Becoming more aware, more intentional, more participatory in life and experiences, and more present and alive in each moment you live

—Australian National University
Mindfulness is....

Not just a relaxation technique...
Not going into a trance... or state of hypnosis...
Not a mysterious practice that can only be understood by the few...
Not a means of becoming a psychic superman/woman!...
Not dangerous and to be avoided!...
Not the extreme contemplative state described as used by saints, gurus or holy people...
Not running away from reality...

White & Richer (2009)
Mindfulness? Well......

“It’s NOT About the Butterflies”
“I want to be mindful…to practice mindfulness …so that I can be sensitive to the needs of … and my reactions to … my clients”
Definitions and Constructs of mindfulness have been described (Christopher, Christopher & Dunnagon, 2006; Dobkin, 2009), however the potential for mindfulness to enhance professional practice (and result in significant client outcomes) is not well described or understood.
The Study: Methodology

3-Pronged Approach

Focus group with MHPs to better understand their descriptions and perceptions of mindfulness; Analysis with NUD*IST software for development of concepts and 26 individual interviews with MHPs;

Electronic survey with 39-item Baer et. al Mindfulness Scale (558 responses); Analysis with LIME Survey Tools. Grounded Theory Analysis of Individual Interviews with NUD*IST software.

Electronically Piloting our own Mindfulness Tool (CMLS) with 39 participants.
Part 1: Focus Group/Interviews

Focus groups for Construct Development (Russell & Gregory, 2003); Individual Interviews: Grounded Theory for Construct Development (Glaser & Strauss, 1977)

**Participants:** 11 individuals: Females (n=9); males (n=2). 26 individual interviews Females (n=22), Males (n=4). Represented mental health nursing/teaching; social work; occupational therapy; therapy; family therapy; pastoral counselling; health promotion.

**Session/Interviews:** recorded, transcribed, and analyzed for themes/concepts using NUD*IST (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000); Concepts/Themes organized using Baer’s 5-Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire, and Roach Theory of Caring (1982-2002)
Focus Group Questions

1. Can you share with us how you feel about the concept of Mindfulness as it has been presented here today? What do you think?

2. Can you tell us if Mindfulness is similar to anything you do in your role and can you share these similarities? Can you tell us (or write in your own words) about an experience when you believe you were practicing MINDFULNESS? What happened? How do you feel about what happened? What changed?

3. Do you think the practice of Mindfulness is taught or does one come to know it by other means?
Focus Group Questions

4. As the concept of Mindfulness has been described, do you think it would be useful for mental health professionals to practice Mindfulness?

5. I wonder if Mindfulness would be a beneficial practice to use with mental health clients? Why or why not?

6. Would you be interested in attending one or more sessions that taught Mindfulness? Would you feel comfortable bringing a friend or peer who is also employed as a mental health professional?
Interview Question

Considering the definitions of Mindfulness presented here (provides participants with definitions identified earlier) and your own definitions, can you tell me about times you believe you were providing mindful professional practice?
Theme Arising: Thoughtfulness

“I remember to ask my client about things I know to be important to him/her”

“I schedule “Client X” for Fridays because she can always get a ride on Fridays”

“Client B”...her children were taken by protective services and she will only tell that to some people“
Theme Arising: Letting Go of Defensiveness

“Some clients have been hurt pretty bad and may act tough....if a client is showing that, it’s my role to accept her as she is...if I immediately become defensive, I’ve been no help whatsoever. I might think I was hiding it, but she’d know. She will only learn to trust me if I can walk with her through the pain of her bad days and she may show this to me right away”
Theme Arising: Complete Acceptance of Client

She forgets her medications and often doesn’t get her prescription refilled. That’s where she’s at right now and if I am going to be helpful to her in making changes, I accept her as she is right now.

I’ve learned to be less critical. I used to meet with a client and immediately makes lists in my head of what needed to change.

In this job, you have to get past the “good and bad” and the “right and wrong”. It makes you a better person.
Theme Arising: Caring and Compassion

Mindfulness and Caring…You can’t do one without the other-you can’t be mindful if you don’t care, you can’t care without being mindful…the two go together, if you are not being mindful, you are not really there, just physically there.

Professionals are not all caring, and clients know that. “some people are just naturally sensitive, caring and present. You’ve got to be present. Show compassion and empathy;

Some of the characteristics of mindfulness can be taught, but you have to care…be open to the process…receptive to learning”
Theme Arising: Inviting Trust

The client may not start off talking about what is really bothering him, may talk about other things first, but if you are committed to the process and show that, it may take some time— but you will hear the full story before long. When you are genuinely mindful, you invite trust.”
Theme Arising: Commitment

The client needs to trust that you are there for them, and that they can depend on you to do the best job that you can.

We are not making widgets, we are dealing with human life. Imagine people coming to you for help with their deepest issues—that is profound! That is not to be treated lightly!

It’s not as if I can be a therapist today, but not tomorrow. The client depends on you to be the expert and to be open to what they have to say. It’s not as if I say “I don’t like you anymore...go away now”
Theme Arising: Ethics: (Relational Ethics)

Its ethical...an ethical process...paying attention and being responsive... “I feel empathy because he is a human being and I respond to that”

He has full blown AIDS and often experiences negative reactions from people....if this were me, my brother or my son, how would I want him treated? And there’s my answer!

There is a strong social justice component to what we do and that calls for quite a response...a relationship response. All of life is about relationships. You can’t get away from them.

It’s remembering why I got into this work...not for the money, for sure! I made a promise to myself and my profession
Theme Arising: Intentionality

Described by Rollo May (1969) as essential to truly helping relationship. The purposeful, stretching outwards, and caring for. The process leading to interaction in a helpful relationship.

Using your professional skills in a purposeful way. We have knowledge and skills but we use them with some wisdom, and we have some sense of where we can journey with the client with purpose and direction.

I always attempt to go into the room with the client with positive intentions that I can help to make some positive change, regardless of how small. I think this is necessary because we can easily become jaded.
Theme Arising: Presencing

Being Present is not as easy as it sounds. It takes a lot of self-discipline. After awhile it comes easier. Totally focused on the client and not taking mini-mental vacations

When I am truly present, I am not saying, ‘what does she think she’s doing, taking him back again’

Being present with certain cultures is easier than others. Native Canadian clients really get it…often Caucasians want to rush in and fill the space.
Theme Arising: Being Competent

It’s being competent—it’s doing my job. Let’s face it—I’m in private practice. Who knows at the end of the day if I do my job well, or if I zone out while my client is talking? Me, that’s who! You can’t be competent if you are not mindful.

A few years ago, I went to a course on Listening. It was a real eye opener, and I realized I had not been doing a good job of listening. But I got better, and that’s being competent--
Theme Arising: Reflecting on Practice

When I am mindful, I am mindful in reflecting on my professional practice
Phase 11: The Survey

5-facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (Baer, Smith, Hopkins, Kriitemeyer, & Toney (2006) set up in a confidential electronic forum using survey software (Lime Open Source Survey Application, vers. 1.85). A license to operate software purchased through the Lime Canadian Surveys System.

After analysis of Focus Group data, The Baer instrument delivered and electronically scored using Lime Survey.

Invitations electronically distributed to professional organizations related to MHPs: Canadian Federation of Mental Health Nurses; Canadian Association of Social Workers; Canadian Mental Health Association, the Ontario Association of Consultants, Counsellors, Psychometrists and Psychotherapists; Canadian Counseling and Psychotherapy Association, the RNAO Mental Health Nursing Interest Group (MHNIG); Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists; College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario; Association of Vocational Rehabilitation; Passed on from individual to individual and other orgs. Two professional Fb pages. Notices were posted in organizations employing those who interface with clients.
Wherever possible, attempted to have information included in periodicals, newsletters and on web pages.

No more than 80-100 responses were expected

Number of respondents reached 558

High response rate may relate to professionals’ competency with internet technology/ ease of completing an electronic survey
The Survey Tool Respondents

Respondents; (n=558); Female (n=416, 75%); Male (n=138, more than 24.7%); Gender non specified n=4 (less than one percent)

Professions/Occupations were listed as follows: Mental Health Nursing (333, 59.68%); Social Work (65, 11.65%); Psychotherapy (24, 30%); Case Management (20, 3.58%); Medicine (18, 3.23%); Rehabilitation, vocational, Recreation (29, 5.20%); Physiotherapy (3, 0.54%); Occupational Therapy (31, 6%); Other (30, 5.3%), No answer (5, 0.90%).

>5-10 years working experience (86, 15.41%); > 10-15 years (135, 24.19%); More than 15 years (214, 38.35%)
## Gross Survey Results (adjusted for neg responses)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never, or very rarely true</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.62 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely true</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1.99 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes true</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>13.18 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often true</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>43.50 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very often or always true</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>39.17 %</td>
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CMLS

CMLS distributed to 39 individuals

Very often or always true: 28%
Often true: 26%
Sometimes true: 43%
Rarely true: 3%
Never or very rarely true: 0%
Concepts: When Practicing Mindfulness, they were...

- Being Thoughtful of Client’s Situation
- Letting Go of Defensiveness/Own Ego
- Accepting of Clients for Who and Where they Are
- Aware of Clients Need for Caring and Compassion
- Inviting Clients’ Trust
- Being Committed to Client
- Being Ethical (Relational Ethics)
- Being Intentional
- Being Present (Presencing)
- Being Competent
- Being Reflective Practitioners
Roach
Roach
Thank you!
References


References (cont’d)


