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Mindful Self-Care for Clinicians

Welcome!

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Simply Mindful: A 7-Week Course and Personal Handbook for Mindful Living

Reflect: Awaken to the Wisdom of the Here and Now

The Mindfulness Toolbox

Mindful Living Newsletter
MindfulPractices.com

Online Mindfulness CE Training ● Speaking

Today's Roadmap

Introduction

- Challenges for Clinicians
- Mindfulness for Coping – Using Selective Attention

Self-Care Tool #1: Palm the Present Moment

- Physical Grounding Tool

Self-Care Tool #2: Gratitude and G.L.A.D.

- Multi-Sensory Awareness for Distancing from Negativity

Self-Care Tool #3: Stress Detox and Loving-Kindness

- 3-Minute Breath/Body Detox with Loving Kindness Affirmation

Introduction

- Challenges for Caregivers
 - Heightened Anxiety from Clients
 - More Tele-Health
 - Harder to Read Clients, Produces Tension in Clinician
 - Harder to Assess Suicidality
 - Personal Fears and Worries
 - Change in Routines for Most, Technology Concerns
 - New “Don’ts” and “Do’s”

Mindfulness for Self-Care

Selective Attention

News Grabs the Amygdala

** Mindfulness Reduces Mind
Wandering*

** Brings Us Back to the Here and
Now*

** Let's us Choose Our Attitude in
the face of Stress*

Tool #1: Palm the Present Moment

Physical Grounding Practice

Drop into the body...
and counter mind wandering.

Intervention for clearing out and
managing the **RATS**:

R-umination

A-nxiety

T-ransitions

S-tress

Benefits of Mind-Body Connection

- *“The ego is first and foremost a bodily ego.”* –Sigmund Freud
- Body Awareness interrupts mind wandering and the brain’s Default Mode Network (DMN)*
- Meditation strengthens connections between the frontal cortex and the insula **

*Effects of Meditation Experience on Functional Connectivity of Distributed Brain Networks, Frontiers in Human Neuroscience, March 2012 | Volume 6 | Article 38 | 1; Wendy Hasenkamp and Lawrence W. Barsalou

** Treating anxiety with mindfulness: an open trial of mindfulness training for anxious children; Journal of Cognitive Psychotherapy, Vol. 19 No. 4, 2005. Semple, Reid, and Miller

A Wandering Mind Is an Unhappy Mind

- People's minds wander an average of 47% of the time
- Mind wandering (state of not being present) is ubiquitous across all activities. Mind wandering is a predictor of feelings of unhappiness.
- It's not the activity, but how present one is that increases happiness

Mind Wandering and Telomeres

Mind Wandering and Aging Cells

- Telomere length is a measure of biological aging and a correlate of severe stress.
- Individuals reporting high mind wandering had shorter telomeres.
- A present attention state may produce cell longevity.

**Clinical Psychological Science*
Jan 2013 vol. 1 no. 1 (75-83)

*The secret of health for
both mind and body is not
to mourn for the past,
worry about the future, or
anticipate troubles but to
live in the present
moment wisely and
earnestly.*

—The Buddha

“...The power of voluntarily bringing back a wandering attention, over and over again, is the very root of judgment, character, and will...But it is easier to define this idea than to give practical directions for bringing it about.”

— *William James, The Principles of Psychology, 1890*

Tool #2: Palm the Present Moment

Practice:

- Guided Script is included Handouts. Use script until you are comfortable and familiar with various steps.

Teaching: Palm the Present Moment

- 1) Get centered in body
- 2) Rubs palms together then place palms a foot apart
- 2) Slowly bring palms closer until they touch
- 4) Raise elbows and press palms together; Hold for four count
- 4) Release, letting go stress
- 5) Lower arms and hands onto legs; breathe out remaining stress
- 7) Stretch arms over head and exhale as arms come down

Tool #2: Palm the Present Moment

Suggestions for Self-Care:

- Think of this as a portable tool for stress and rumination.
- Schedule Times for Use.
- Use before or after transitions.
- Do the quick 1-Minute Palm the Present Moment between sessions.

Palm the Present Moment Reflection

What was your experience
with Palm the Present?

How might you adapt it so
it works better for you?

Tool #2: Gratitude and G.L.A.D.

Physical Grounding Practice

Drop into the body...
and counter mind wandering.

Intervention for clearing out and
managing the **RATS**:

R-umination

A-nxiety

T-ransitions

S-tress

Tool #2: Gratitude and G.L.A.D.

Gratitudo...

- Brain wires up by what is in the field of focused attention
 - Focus on the good things
 - Savor the ordinary
 - Attitude of kindness

However, we sometimes forget to have Gratitude
for things... such as...

Consistent Gratitude Practice

PHYSICAL

- * Stronger immune system
- * Lower blood pressure
- * Less bothered by pain
- * Lower blood pressure
- * Exercise more and take better care of health
- * Sleep longer and feel more refreshed upon waking

PSYCHOLOGICAL

- * Increased positive emotions
- * More alert, alive, and awake
- * More joy and pleasure
- * More optimism & happiness

SOCIAL

- * More helpful, generous, and compassionate
- * More forgiving and more outgoing
- * Feel less lonely and isolated

Gratitude for Depression

Depression Intervention:

2003 study had participants write down five things they were grateful for during the week for a period of 10 weeks. These people were:*

- 25% happier than persons who wrote down their day's frustrations or simply listed the day's events.
- More optimistic about the future.
- Felt better about their lives.
- Participated in one and a half hours more exercise per week than those in the control groups.

**Counting Blessings Versus Burdens: An Experimental Investigation of Gratitude and Subjective Well-Being in Daily Life—Robert Emmons and M. McCullough, Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 2003, Vol. 84, No. 2, 377–389*

Gratitude for the Ordinary Study

- Participants chronicled both an “Ordinary” daily event and “Extraordinary” Event
 - Photos and writing about the day
- Subjects predicted which they would most interesting to review in the future
- Majority predicted the Extraordinary Event
- 3 Months Later, Subjects Reviewed Both Events:
 - Individuals greatly underestimated the ordinary day and what they could gain from it.
 - Subjects found the Ordinary Event more meaningful and interesting than the Extraordinary one.

Five Kinds of Gratitude...

1) Basic Gratitude, Necessities

2) Ordinary Gratitude

3) Personal Gratitude

4) Relational Gratitude

5) Paradoxical Gratitude

...AKA Silver Lining Gratitude

Ordinary Gratitude: Saint Teresa's Prescription

My daughters, what are these drops of oil in our lamps?

They are the small things of daily life:

faithfulness,

punctuality,

small words of kindness,

a thought for others,

our way of being silent, of looking,

of speaking, and of acting.

These are the true drops of love.

Be faithful in small things because
it is in them that your strength lies.

Practice: Savoring the Ordinary

Using the categories below, choose 1-2 “small things,” as Mother Teresa referred to them—to savor for 5 minutes.

1) Identify One Small Thing from This Week

- Things cherished or appreciated, like reading the paper, sipping coffee, giving a hug or kiss to someone special, feeling of water in the shower, etc.

2) Observe One Ordinary Good Thing in Your Surroundings

- Take a mental snapshot of how you’re sitting in a nice chair, watching your kids play, interacting with a friendly person, or seeing the sunlight coming in through a window.

3) Remember One Kindness from Today

- Did you help someone today? Did someone help you? Bring to mind that ordinary (yet special) word of encouragement you shared with another or vice versa. Remember even the smallest act of kindness—a pat on the back, a smile, etc.

Three Gratitude Practices

INTERPERSONAL PRACTICE 1: Write down one thing you were grateful for in the past week and then tell the story behind that gratitude to another.

INTERPERSONAL PRACTICE 2: Write a Gratitude Letter about something positive that another person did for you, and present that individual with the letter.

PERSONAL PRACTICE 3: Make a Gratitude Bowl (or teacup) for the day or week, and put a penny in for each time you feel grateful for something. Track how many pennies you accumulate.

Practice: G.L.A.D. Daily Snapshot*

*G.L.A.D. is an acronym for finding joy
and balance using cognitive,
behavioral and mindfulness skills*

G - find one **Gratitude** you're thankful for today

L - find one new thing you **Learned** today

A - find one **Accomplishment** you did today

D - find one thing of **Delight** that touched you today

Journal or write on an index card

Using G.L.A.D. at Home

*G.L.A.D. is an acronym for finding joy
and balance using cognitive,
behavioral and mindfulness skills*

- Make this a partner practice sharing all the **G.L.A.D.** elements you noticed that related to a significant person in your household. Then, they share their **G.L.A.D.** with you.
- At mealtime, go around the table as each person takes one letter from **G.L.A.D.** and shares that with others.
- Keep a **G.L.A.D.** journal that you can look back on and review.

Questions and Hypotheticals...

Which gratitude practice(s) worked best for you?

How could you integrate even one into your day?

Tool #3: Stress Detox and Loving-Kindness

Overcome Fear with Breath and Loving Kindness

- Diaphragmatic Breathing to Turn on Parasympathetic Nervous System
- Integrate the 3 Min. Stress Detox with Loving Kindness Affirmation

Mindful Breathing Awareness

20-minutes of diaphragmatic breathing produced:

- A reduction of negative feelings
- An increase in neurotransmitter serotonin for improved mood
- A higher concentration of oxygen in the pre-frontal cortex
(mindful attention and higher level processing)

International Journal of Psychophysiology 2011, May, Activation of the anterior prefrontal cortex and serotonergic system is associated with improvements in mood and EEG changes induced by Zen meditation practice in novices; Toho University School of Medicine

Brief Mindfulness Reduces Stress & Blood Pressure

Pilot Study with 13 Priests at University of Portland*

- Priests a vulnerable population to stress and high blood pressure
- Program consisted of two 1-hour training sessions on “contemplative breathing” and 3-minute practice sessions three times a day.
- Results: Significant reduction in Blood pressure and Percived Stress Scale

* Joy Mocieri, RN, BSN, CEN, TNCC, *The Unique Power of Mindfulness on Blood Pressure and Stress Reduction on a Priest Community*; University of Portland School of Nursing, June 24, 2018

Turning on the Parasympathetic System

Where are you breathing?

- **Rewiring the Stress Response**
 - 20-30 sec. to turn down stress volume
 - 10x increase in oxygen
 - Lower B.P., respiration
 - Increase alpha waves
 - Increase serotonin

5 Regulating Breathing Practices



Part 1: The 3-Minute Stress Detox

Find a quiet place. Then focus on the following things:

Minute: #1: Notice your body and posture. Sit up in a posture that allows for easy breathing. Notice your feet on the floor, the position of your legs, knees, arms, hands. Erect but relaxed.

Part 1: The 3-Minute Stress Detox

Find a quiet place. Then focus on the following things:

Minute: #2: Place your attention on the breath. Observe each in-breath and out-breath. Find a normal rhythm... *it's perfect just as it is!* Imagine each breath rising and then ebbing... like a wave on the ocean. Exhale slowly, noticing how nice it is to let go.

Part 1: The 3-Minute Stress Detox

Find a quiet place. Then focus on the following things:

Minute: #3: For this last 60 seconds, watch for any tightness, tension, worry or negativity in the body. We're going to use guided visualization to notice the next breath coming in from the crown center in the head.

Picture this as a white or golden light of harmony and balance. Let it to to any part of the body where there's tension or anxiety, and with your exhale, let the breath carry this down, down the body and out through the bottom of your feet into the earth for recycling. With each exhale feel the body grow more relaxed and at peace.

Part 2: Overcome Fear with Loving Kindness

Fredrickson's *Broaden and Build* Theory for Positive Emotions

- Asserts that positive emotions broaden attention and thinking in response to diverse experiences, not narrowly focused threats.
- Positive emotions increase connection, trust, and openness.
- Positive emotions build relationships and resources.
- Loving-kindness Meditation (LKM) increased daily positive experiences and broadened personal resources and life satisfaction, and altered response to negative, depression-inducing emotions.

Loving Kindness Affirmation

- *May I be safe*
- *May I be happy*
- *May I be healthy*
- *May I be at peace*
- Optional to add: “May I be...Secure, Loved, Forgiven, Accepted, etc.”

Loving-kindness and compassion meditation: potential for psychological interventions ,
Hoffman, Grossman, and Hinton, et. al., Clinical Psychological Review, 2011
Nov;31(7):1126-32. Epub 2011 Jul 26.

Tool #3: Stress Detox with Loving-Kindness

- **1-minute focus on body**
- **1-minute focus on breath**
- **1-minute breath in loving kindness for yourself; exhale it for all other beings**
- **OPTIONAL:** Use a single word, such as “safe” “connected” “secure” “peaceful” “energized” “compassion” with each in and out breath.

“The trouble with ordinary reality
is that a lot of it is dull,
so we long ago decided to
leave for somewhere better.”

-- Charles Tart, Living the Mindful Life

“Boredom is simply lack of attention.”

-- Fritz Perls

Questions and Discussion...

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MindfulPractices.com **facebook.com/mndfulness**

Dana Foundation, brain and immunology: **www.dana.org**

Greater Good: **www.GreaterGood.berkeley.edu**

Hope Foundation, Professional Development for Educators: **www.hopefoundation.org**

The Mindful Awareness Research Center: **www.marc.ucla.edu**

Mindfulness Research Monthly: **www.mindfulexperience.org**

Center for Investigating Healthy Minds; Richard Davidson, **www.investigatinghealthyminds.com**

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PALM THE PRESENT MOMENT

by Donald Altman, M.A., LPC

author, *Simply Mindful: A 7-Week Course and Personal Handbook for Mindful Living*

HANDOUT: Palm the Present Moment

Instructions: Use this portable grounding meditation whenever you find yourself getting anxious, worried, feeling overwhelmed, lost in negative thoughts, or feeling uncertain about the future while transitioning from one place to another. Spend as much time as necessary to do this the first time.

Once you're familiar with how to Palm the Present Moment, you can shorten the process and do this in just one-minute, if desired.

Sit in a comfortable chair and take a couple of nice, long, calming breaths. Now, just raise your hands up to the height of the heart center, with the palms facing one another—about a foot or so apart. Notice how much tension there is in just holding the arms and hands up in the air.

Next, ever so slowly, bring the hands closer until you feel even the slightest or subtle sensation of energy, pressure, heat, or warmth. Stop when you feel this, and just notice this for a few moments. Observe closely this sensation. Is the heat, warmth, energy, or pressure constant? Or, does it vary slightly moment to moment?

Now, gently move the palms closer until just the fingertips come together with the most feathery, lightest touch. Imagine that the molecules from the fingertips of your right hand are dancing with the molecules of the fingertips of your left hand. You might even think about what dance they are doing... the foxtrot, the samba, the tango, or the jitterbug!

Now, you continue to bring your palms together until they lightly touch. As you do this, notice how the fingers straighten out and how more heat builds up between the palms. With your palms together, this is a good time to reflect for a few moments on the body, which is a precious gift that we possess.

(Rest in silent appreciation for 5-10 seconds)

Let's see what it's like to tense, then relax the body. Keeping your palms touching, raise your elbows up to the side. Press with only ten percent of the total pressure you could exert. Now, press your hands together even harder—up to twenty percent of total pressure. (Stop pressing if you feel any pain. Press only as hard as you experience no pain or discomfort.)

Again, observe how far up your arm the tension goes. Does it extend to the wrists, the elbows, the shoulders, the shoulder blades, the back, the chest? Maybe you feel more heat building in the palms of your hands? Which muscles are tense? After about five seconds of this, let your shoulders and elbows relax and fall. Release all this tension. Notice how nice it is to let go of tightness and tension in the body.

Finally, very slowly open your palms, like flower blossoms opening to the morning sun. Sense the coolness in your palms as the heat dissipates. Finally, let the weight of gravity tug on your hands and arms, letting these gently fall like leaves from a tree, until they come to rest on your lap or legs. Take a nice, long inhale, and as you exhale, imagine all the remaining stress draining out with the exhale down your legs and out of the bottom of your feet—where it will flow into the Earth for recycling.

If you want, just sit for a few more moments in appreciation for the body that follows your commands and carries your consciousness so you can achieve your life goals. How marvelous!

* this practice is excerpted from *The Mindfulness Toolbox* by Donald Altman

Excerpted from:

The Mindfulness Toolbox by Donald Altman, M.A., LPC

Tool #48 – Loving-Kindness Affirmation

LEARNING STYLES:

The following learning styles are compatible with this practice:

Verbal-Linguistic

Visual-Spatial

Reflective-Intrapersonal

Existential-Meaning

Thoughts for Therapists

Suffering is one thing that all humans have in common. (Hopefully, so is joy) Still, as a human being it is not possible to avoid loss of some kind. Possessing a human body means being subject to illness, frailty, aging, and ultimately, death. Of course, trying to deny, resist, or pretend that this doesn't exist is yet another form of suffering. There seems to be no way out of this mess, and yet, there is a way to bring meaning to loss and pain. It is called compassion—whose original meaning translates as “to be with suffering.”

To know suffering means that we can try to relieve suffering. Unlike empathy, through which we can step into the emotional shoes of another person, compassion impels us toward being available to reduce the suffering of others through selfless action. Indeed, over twenty-five percent, or one-quarter of all Americans, volunteer or give service to those in need. While some researchers believe compassion is an instinct that leads to survival, others believe that it can be taught. Either way, more compassion—and self-compassion—is greatly needed.

Researcher Richard Davidson—director of The Center for Investigating Healthy Minds and author of *The Emotional Life of Your Brain* (co-authored

with Sharon Begley)—has put the Dalai Lama’s monks into magnetic resonance imaging machines to see if brain function was altered in those who have practiced ten- thousand hours or longer of compassion meditation. His work shows that intensive training in compassion produces significant changes in brain function. Davidson has also found that compassion can be learned, and that it results in altruistic behavior in subjects who undertake compassion training.

What do we do with this knowledge? We can put it to use by using the ancient loving-kindness meditation or affirmation practice. This practice generates compassion toward oneself and others, as well as forgiveness—both attributes that can firmly assist those struggling with pain and the loss of physical well-being.

Tips for Working with Clients

- ✓ *The Loving-Kindness Affirmation* is closely related to Tool #50, *At Peace with Pain*, which is another meditation that can be used to engender warm feelings of love and understanding. Share both of these with clients as a nice boxed set.
- ✓ Before working with loving-kindness, it is important to understand the religious or spiritual background of your client.
 - While loving-kindness was originally an ancient Buddhist practice, the words are considered by attachment researchers to be “security priming words”—that is, words that prime the limbic emotional core of the brain for feelings of safety, trust, and openness.
 - When exposed to certain words, such as *love*, *closeness*, *safety*, etc., people have experienced more openness and trust toward others. To be described in a more secular way, this meditation can be described as a security priming.
 - This meditation is about the deep wish for one’s well-being, and that can be imagined as coming from any source—as a blessing, as an affirmation, as coming from any higher power or from God, etc.
- ✓ Work with clients in adapting the words in this meditation in appropriate ways. For example:

- The words “May I be...” could be transformed into an active choice by stating, “I choose to be...”
 - The meditation could be stated as an affirmation by stating, “I will be...” or “I am...”
 - Other words can be added to the actual meditation, such as “May I be *loved, accepted, understood, forgiven, pain-free,*” etc.
- ✓ What follows in the handout can be used as a script for guiding the client through this practice for the first time.
 - ✓ Practicing this meditation can be a powerful and emotional experience. Always allow time for processing after using this in a session.
 - Always have the client state loving-kindness for themselves first, *then* afterwards send it out to others.

HANDOUT: Loving-Kindness Affirmation

In his book *Works of Love*, Danish philosopher and theologian Søren Kierkegaard shared some wisdom on the essence of love. He wrote:

*To cheat oneself out of love is the most terrible deception;
it is an eternal loss for which there is no reparation,
either in time or in eternity.*

As someone grappling with pain—either physical or emotional (maybe both)—it may be hard to think about the idea of love. But the affirmation practiced in these pages is not like the love you may be thinking of. It is not the flavor of love that is romantic, sentimental, or nostalgic—dependent on one person or a specific memory. Rather, this is the deeply profound and compassionate wish for the well-being of all persons.

It is predicated on the basis that all beings deserve this non-discriminating love, that we all *need* it because all of us have struggled or suffered in some way. Even that person who seems happy and appears to have it all together will deal with loss and pain in life. And so, this practice is a form of compassion—which really means *to be with the suffering of another*.

We begin by developing compassion for ourselves. This is a process, since you may not feel you are deserving of this deep wish for your well-being. If this is the case, you can begin by picturing the young baby, toddler, or child you once were, and who was deserving of this loving meditation. State the words for that part of you.

Offering love and charity toward our neighbors is a central tenant to all wisdom traditions. Key examples of loving-kindness are found in stories of how Jesus, Buddha, and Mohammed all fed the hungry and starving, without discrimination. Whatever your background may be, this is an inclusive practice that anyone can benefit from. In addition, you can see the words here in any way that fits with your religious or spiritual background—as a blessing, a prayer, an affirmation, and so on.

Instructions: Follow along with the words below, stating them to yourself over and over... *like you really mean it.*

1) BEGIN WITH FORGIVENESS.

We've all been hurt, which is why this practice begins with forgiveness. You may be that parent, for example, who knows you have unintentionally wronged your children and yet hope for the grace of forgiveness. Or, you may have inadvertently hurt someone because you didn't know any better. Whatever the case may be, reflect on the words below. Allow forgiveness to act as a salve for your wounded spirit so that you may let go and move on. By sending forgiveness, you also open the gateway to a more awakened and sensitive behavior—alert to even the subtle consequences of your actions and thoughts. Jesus spoke to this in the Bible (Luke 6:37) when he said, “Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.”

Repeat the following words once before moving on.

*May I forgive myself for hurting others.
May others forgive me for hurting them.
May I forgive myself for hurting myself.*

2) SAY LOVING-KINDNESS FOR YOURSELF.

Repeat the following words over and over. Say them until you can feel the words resonating within. This could be for five minutes, for 10, for 30 minutes.

*May I be safe.
May I be happy.
May I be healthy.
May I be peaceful.*

Optionally, add these words—
May I be free from pain, hunger, and suffering.

3) SAY LOVING-KINDNESS FOR OTHERS.

Next, you will repeat the loving-kindness meditation/affirmation for others. Picture these individuals looking radiant and healthy and happy as you send them this deep wish for their well-being.

Look at the list of six groups below. The top two are self-explanatory, but the “neutral persons” group refers to persons who you may see or interact with from time to time but who you don’t really know—such as that person at the checkout stand at the grocery store, that person who lives down the street who you wave to, etc.

The “unfriendly group” represents those persons who are difficult persons in your life. They may have even created pain and abuse. This is a group that presents the greatest challenge for sending out the loving-kindness words. If you find that you can’t send to this group, you can stop and start sending love to yourself. Then, where you feel resonance with the words, again start sending loving-kindness to others, starting from the top of the list.

Remember, that even that abuser or difficult person in your life has suffered in some way. Even this person would benefit from such a blessing. In addition, you can know that difficult person does not have to know you are sending these words out to them. In fact, they may not even be alive. Because loving-kindness breaks down the walls of separation between ourselves and others, saying it for others—even those who may have hurt or harmed us—is also beneficial to us! Here are the categories and the way you can repeat the loving-kindness wish of well-being for these groups of persons.

- 1) Teachers/mentors/guides
- 2) Family members
- 3) Friends
- 4) Neutral persons
- 5) Unfriendly persons
- 6) All Persons/living beings/living things without discrimination

Repeat the following loving-kindness words for each of the above groups.

May (name here) be safe.
May (name here) be happy.
May (name here) be healthy.
May (name here) be peaceful.

Optionally, add these words—

May (name here) be free from pain, hunger, and suffering.

4) CONCLUDE WITH A FINAL BLESSING OR WISH FOR OTHERS.

After you have extended loving-kindness to all the six groups, end with following words.

Say the following words once.

*May suffering ones by suffering-free,
May the fear-struck fearless be,
May grieving ones shed all grief,
May all beings find relief.*

Reflections: What was it like for you to say the loving-kindness meditation or affirmation? Was there any part of this that you found difficult?

The loving-kindness practice takes time and patience. How do you think this could help you move toward forgiveness—either toward yourself or others?

How could you develop an ongoing loving-kindness meditation or affirmation practice? Where would be an ideal place to practice this—where you might be in the solitude of Nature or at a place you design and dedicate to this gentle practice of cultivating peace, kindness, and compassion?
