

The power of the present moment - Mindful Processing in psychotherapy and counselling

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‘It is remarkable how little we know about experience that is happening right now... This relative ignorance is especially strange in light of the following:

First we are subjectively alive and conscious only *now*. Now is when we directly live our lives. Everything else is once or twice removed. The only time of raw subjective reality, of phenomenal experience, is the present moment’ (Daniel Stern, p. 3, *The Present Moment in Psychotherapy and Everyday Life*)

What is mindfulness?

Mindfulness means **paying attention**
in a particular way:
on purpose
in the present moment
and nonjudgmentally.

Jon Kabat-Zinn

Definition of Mindfulness

Mindfulness is non-judgemental, accepting awareness of what is going on in present moment (Černetič, 2005).

Construct of mindfulness

- Direct experience in the present moment is fundamental part of Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Islamic, Jewish and Taoist teaching (Siegel, 2007)
- Construct of mindfulness as psychological construct independent of traditions – inherent capacity of human organism
- Increasing number of research in last 10 years in clinical and health psychology

TWO MODES OF MIND

(Segal, Williams & Teasdale, 2002)

- **DOING mode** is entered when we register discrepancies between the idea how things are and an idea of how we wished things to be. The aim of this mode is to effectively solve problems. In the case of mental difficulties, doing mode is aiming towards change of existing problems. This mode of functioning also involves continuous **monitoring and evaluation of progress** towards reducing the gap between the problematic state and the desired goal. This mode often produces a sense of dissatisfaction, because this mode is preoccupied with mismatches between present and desired state.
- **BEING mode** is the opposite of the doing mode. The focus of the being mode is 'accepting' and 'allowing' what is, without any immediate pressure to change it. Being mode is concerned with **immediate experience of the present moment**. Mindfulness invites us in Being mode of mind.

Mindfulness Based Treatment Approaches

- Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR)
- Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT)

Mindfulness is developed through intensive mindful meditation practice.

Benefits of mindfulness

- Mindfulness training helps to reduce subjective states of suffering, improve immune functioning, accelerate rates of healing, nurture interpersonal relationships and an overall sense of well being (Davidson et al, 2003)
- Mindfulness based cognitive therapy prevents relapse in cases of chronic depression (Segal, Williams, & Teasdale, 2002)
- Use of mindfulness training with different disorders: borderline personality disorder, substance abuse problems, obsessive-compulsive disorder, anxiety disorders.

Development of Mindful Processing technique

- Mindfulness Processing invites the client to become aware of moment to moment subjective experience with acceptance.
- Relational mindfulness – the therapist is also in state of presence and invites the client to be mindful of present moment (two minds are stronger than one mind!)
- Difference with other mindfulness approaches:
 - the aim is to be mindful in relationship and not to meditate alone
 - awareness and acceptance of present moment promotes processing of experience in psychotherapy

Use of Mindful Processing

- As a separate technique or integrated in different psychotherapy schools
- Use in psychotherapy, counseling and/or coaching
- Can be used for:
 - Experiential exploration and processing of current issues
 - Processing of past painful experiences
 - Developing positive resources for the future use

Mindful Processing Protocol

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STEP 1: DESCRIPTION OF MINDFUL PROCESSING TO THE CLIENT

STEP 2: DESCRIPTION OF THE ORIGINAL SITUATION

'What issue would you like to discover more about?'

STEP 3: FINDING BODY SENSATION CONNECTED TO THE WHOLE

PROBLEM

'When you think about the whole problem, how do you feel in your body now?'

'Where do you feel it in your body now?'

STEP 4: FOCUSING ON BODY SENSATION RELATED TO THE WHOLE PROBLEM

'Just close your eyes and focus on that body sensation. Just observe what is happening.'

Mindful Processing Protocol

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CYCLE OF PROCESSING

STEP 5: DESCRIPTION OF INNER EXPERIENCE

'Just open your eyes and tell me what has happened.' (empathically) or
'O.K. just slowly open your eyes and tell me what occurred. '

STEP 6: INTRAPSYCHIC CONTACT AND MINDFULNESS

'Just stay with that _____ (sensation, thought, feeling or image) or
'Just focus on that'

'Just observe that' or 'Just be aware of _____ (sensation, thought, feeling or image)

GO TO STEP FIVE

STEP 7: END OF PROCESSING

You can check with the client if it is O.K. to stop here, or he would like to do additional cycles.

If you decide to stop, then ask:

'If you bring the original problem in your awareness, what comes?'

Fundamental assumptions of Mindful Processing

1.) **NATURAL HEALING OF ORGANISM**

- Rogers and Gendlin
- Adaptive information processing (Shapiro)

2.) **FOCUSING ON THE BODILY SENSATIONS**

- Contribution of Eugene Gendlin – ‘felt sense’

3.) **ESTABLISHING INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL CONTACT**

- Internal contact and external contact as essential healing mechanism in Integrative psychotherapy

4.) **ATTENDING TO MOMENT BY MOMENT EXPERIENCING**

Fundamental assumptions of Mindful Processing

5.) INTEGRATING AND MAKING NEW CONNECTION BETWEEN EXPERIENCE

- Referential process (Bucci): links between subsymbolic (implicit) elements and symbolic elements

6.) FREE ASSOCIATION

7.) THERAPIST'S ATTUNEMENT AND PRESENCE – 'RELATIONAL MINDFULNESS'

8.) CONTAINING THE EXPERIENCE BY THERAPIST AND CLIENT

9.) PROMOTES INTEGRATION AND PROCESSING OF COGNITIVE, AFFECTIVE AND SOMATIC EXPERIENCE

Preliminary qualitative research of MP (Vodnik & Žvelc, 2008)

Problem:

What are 'clients' experiences during Mindful processing?

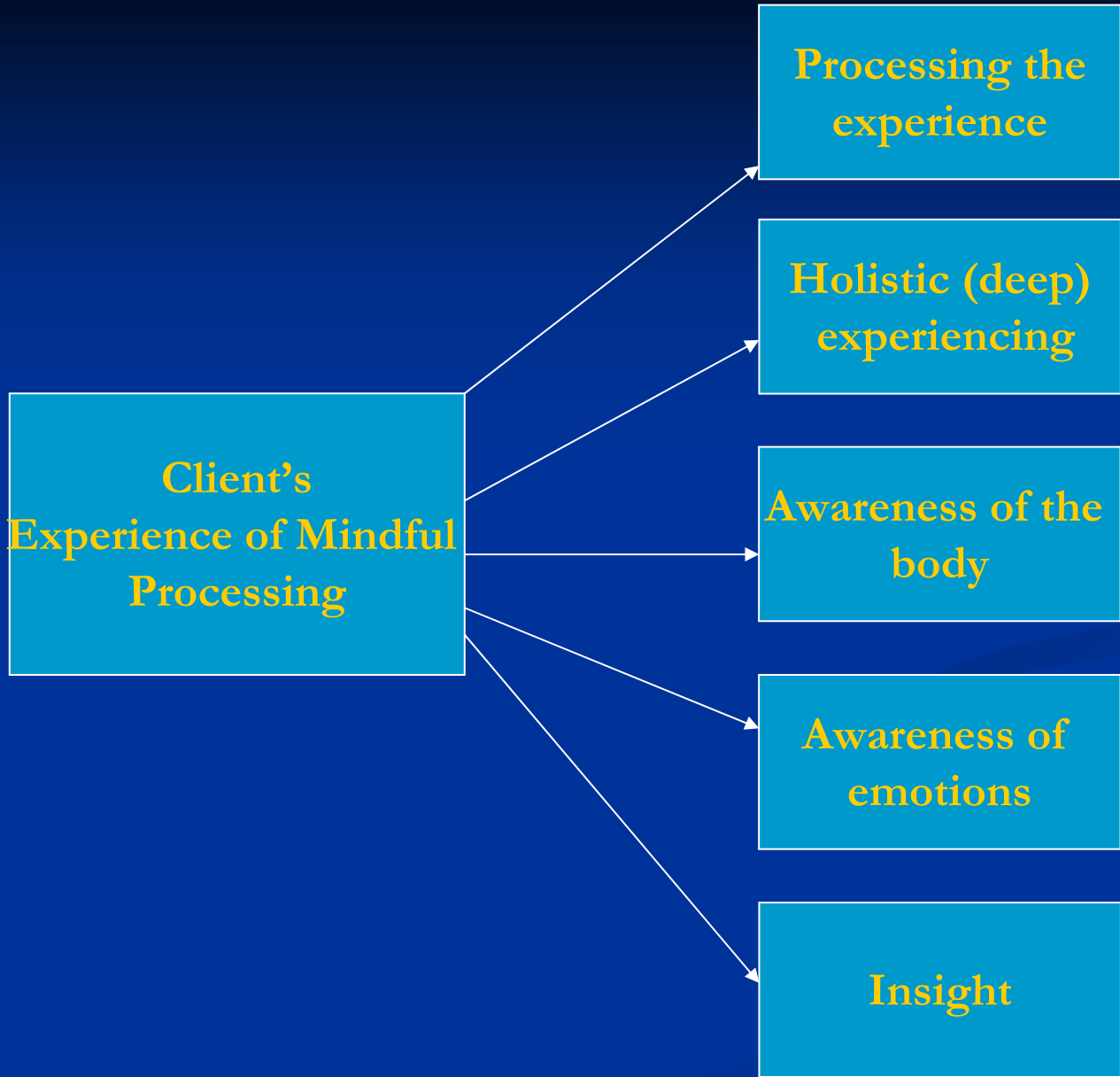
What is difference between MP and other techniques?

What clients value in MP?

Participants: 14 students of psychotherapy (second and third year of integrative psychotherapy and transactional analysis)

Procedure: Participants had a session of Mindful processing connected to problematic situation. Participants filled the questionnaire about their experience of Mindful Processing just after the session. ‘Therapists’ were students of second and third year of psychotherapy.

Analyses: The researcher coded the participants description of their experiences and conducted the analysis.



Conclusions – Typical client's experience of MP

- 1) In the beginning of MP clients were deeply experiencing body sensations and emotions connected with original situation.
- 2) Emotional and bodily arousal was increasing and leading to relief and positive emotions. (transformation of emotions)
- 3) These clients trusted the process without having the goal in mind. They could let go of the control and just accept what is happening moment from moment.
- 4) Such stance toward experience lead to new insights and awareness regarding the original situation.

Conclusions

- The second group of clients had difficulties in accepting and tolerating sensations and feelings. They tried to have strong control over the situation. These clients didn't develop new insight or awareness about the problematic situation. However most of them experienced relaxation after MP.
- In comparison with other psychotherapies participants describe Mindful processing as non-oriented toward goal, bodily oriented, non-directive and client-centred.

Original situation



Awareness of body sensations

**DEEP
EXPERIENCING**

Awareness of emotions

TRANSFORMATION OF EMOTIONS



**Positive emotions and
body sensations,
new awareness – insight.**

Mindful Processing Model (Žvelc, 2008)

Accepting and tolerating
'difficult' experiences.
Verbalisation of experience.

Extracting the meaning from
emotional experience.

WE INVITE YOU TO
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THROUGH MINDFUL
PROCESSING

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