

Mindfulness 101: Experiencing Your Mind and the Neurology Behind It

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Mindfulness is defined as the process of paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgmentally (Kabat-Zinn, 1994). This kind of attention “nurtures greater awareness, clarity, and acceptance of present-moment reality” (p. 4). Mindfulness practices can assist individuals in developing a conscious awareness of what is happening in their mind, body, and surrounding environment at any given moment. In many cases, this focused attention can lead to an increase in the flexibility of thoughts (Luoma, Hayes, & Walser, 2007; Wilson & DuFrene, 2008; Hayes, Strosahl, & Wilson, 2012; Teasdale, Williams & Segal, 2014).

Within the field of communication disorders, specifically, some research exists supporting the implementation of mindfulness practices into the therapeutic process (Boyle, 2011; Plexico & Sandage, 2011; Silverman, 2012; Palasik & Michise, 2013; Michise & Palasik, 2017; Emge & Pellowski, 2019). For individuals with communication disorders, direct focus on being in the moment can lead to a willingness to observe all that occurs during a given speaking situation - the attitudes and emotions tied to speaking; the actual physical behaviors of speaking; and, the thoughts that may accompany the speaking situation. Facing negative thoughts and perceptions directly may help individuals to desensitize themselves and more clearly decipher reality from the stories they may be creating. Additionally, by engaging in mindfulness practices, clinicians can connect with their clients and guide them in letting go of what happened before a session or thoughts about what might happen after a session so that they can focus on the present moment and what they hope to accomplish during that given time.

In the field of neuroscience, research has shown that mindfulness approaches are physically changing the structures and chemistry of the brain (Kandel, 1998; Hölzel et al., 2011; Roberts-Wolfe, 2012; Cunningham & Kirkland, 2014; Kross et. al., 2014;). This line of research provides support for continued training in mindfulness practices and the impact on people with communication disorders.

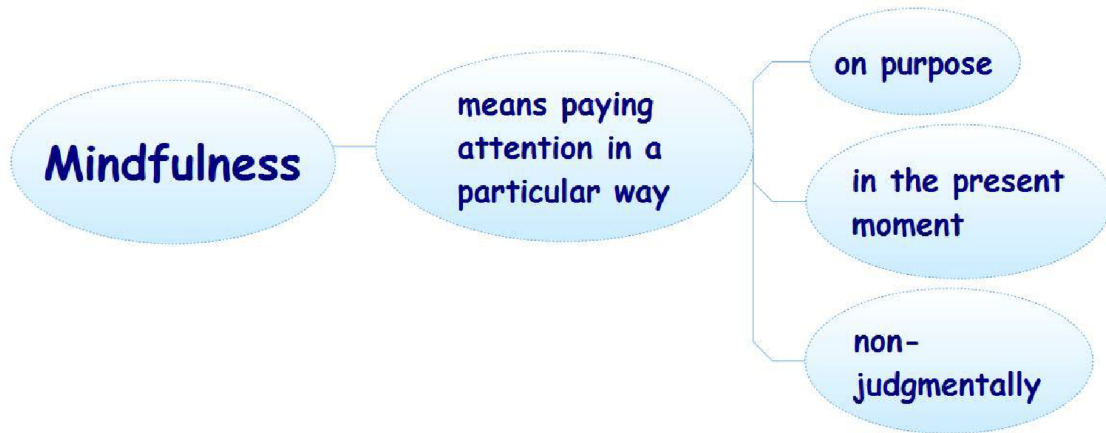
Mindfulness is a skill that can be taught, learned, and practiced through a wide variety of activities and exercises. The word *practice* is used because, like most skills, mindfulness has a practice effect. The more time clinicians and clients spend practicing mindfulness, the more they will be able to understand, benefit from, and generalize these skills to various communication situations and their everyday lives in general. This session will allow clinicians to practice mindfulness and leave with experiential activities they can use with their clients. Furthermore, presenters will summarize some of the current neurological research that exists as it relates to mindfulness.

Feel free to contact us directly for more information (and a copy of the PPT):

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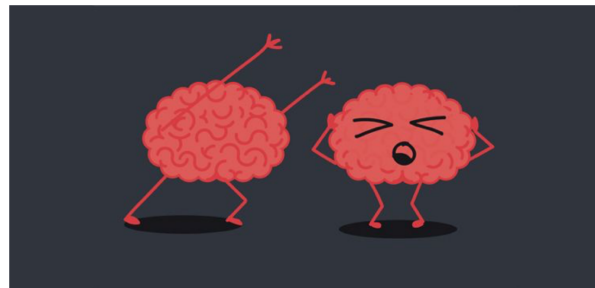
What is Mindfulness?



Kabat-Zinn (2003)

Mindfulness Misconceptions

- Absence of stress
- Always feeling great
- Absence of thinking
- Being complacent
- Religious
- Automatic
- Simplistic



mindfulschools.org

Tips for Incorporating Mindfulness into Therapy

1. Make it a regular therapeutic activity
2. Use technology (*use of phone or via telepractice*)
3. Introduce new terminology - "observing" "noticing"
4. MIX IT UP! *Do a variety of mindfulness activities*
 - a) Zentangle
 - b) Body scan
 - c) Coloring mindfully
 - d) Five senses meditation
5. Get moving (*somatic psychology*)
 - a) Incorporate yoga moves into therapy - can help get body ready to work/listen
6. Experiment with mindfulness in your own life
7. Encourage your clients to learn more