



Treating Adolescent Trauma with Mindfulness

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Disclosures

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Learning objectives

- Describe the mindfulness component of ITCT-A as it was adapted for use with adolescents
- Articulate clinical issues & contraindications to consider before using mindfulness-based interventions to treat traumatized adolescents
- Explain the personal benefits of mindfulness for therapists who work with traumatized teens

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Roadmap


- What mindfulness is & what it isn't
- Mindfulness in ITCT-A
- Treating trauma with mindfulness
 - Cognitive
 - Emotional
 - Physiological
 - Behavioral
- Teaching mindfulness
- Summary & take-home points




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“The faculty 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 ideal than to give practical directions for bringing it about.”

William James (1890)

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“Mindfulness means paying attention to things as they are in any given moment, however they are, rather than as we want them to be.”

Williams, Teasdale, Segal & Kabat-Zinn (2007)

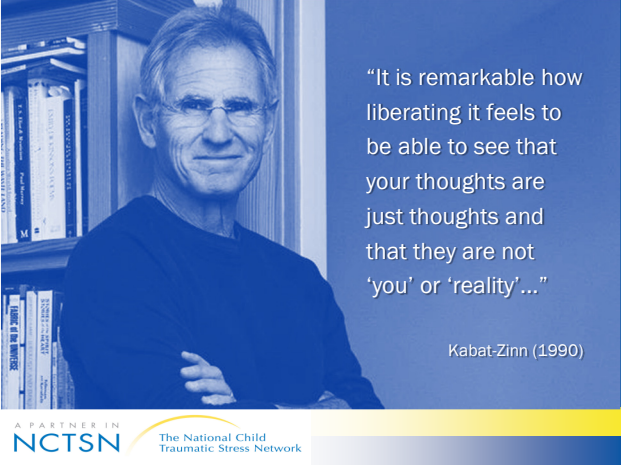
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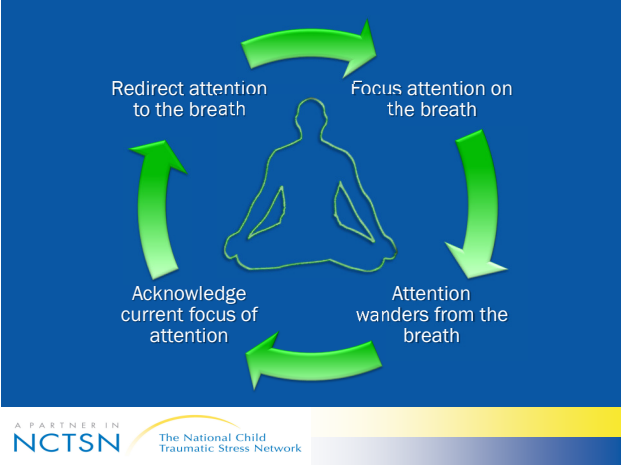












Mindful breathing

- Sit with straight back & hands in the lap
- Closed eyes (or a "soft" unfocused gaze)
- Bring attention to the experience of breathing
- When you become aware that mind has wandered, simply note the thoughts & feelings
- Then, return attention to watching the breath

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What mindfulness is not...

c'mon, inner peace.
I don't have all day.



- Turning off thoughts
- Emptying the mind
- An escape from reality
- Passive or complacent
- Magical or mystical
- Hypnotic or addictive
- Self-indulgent
- Religion
- A quick fix

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**Living.
Every.
Moment.**

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Integrative Treatment of Complex Trauma for Adolescents ITCT-A

- Multiply traumatized, socially marginalized teens
- Culturally sensitive
- Flexible time-frame individualized for each client
- Regular assessments
- Early attention to safety issues
- Titrated therapeutic exposure
- Skills development & problem-solving
- Systems-level advocacy

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Mindfulness in ITCT-A

- Optional module
- Therapist training & experience is recommended
- Simple mindful awareness activities can be taught with minimal training
- Benefits to being a mindful therapist
- Refer to a qualified mindfulness program for more extensive training

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Applications

- Stress management
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Physical tension
- Pain management
- Emotion self-regulation
- Behavioral self-management
(e.g., anger management, eating disorders, alcohol/substance abuse relapse prevention)



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Contraindications

- Ongoing traumatic environment
- Chronically overwhelmed
- Current alcohol/substance abuse
- Mania
- Severe anxieties
- Severe depression
- Suicidality
- Psychosis



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Available youth programs

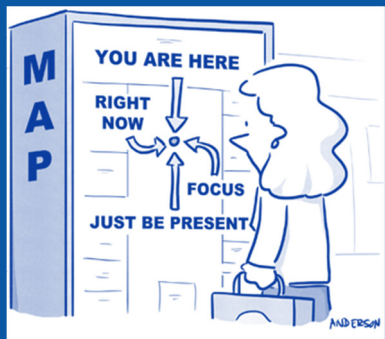
- Inward Bound Mindfulness Education (iBme)
- Stressed Teens (MBSR-T)
- A Still Quiet Place
- Learning to BREATHE
- Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy for Children (MBCT-C)
- Mindfulness for Teens (MBCT-A)
- Connecting Adolescents to Learning Mindfulness (CALM)
- Making Friends with Yourself (MSC for children & teens)
- Mindfulness-based Eating Awareness Training (MB-EAT)
- Mindfulness-based Relapse Prevention (MBRP)



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Inhale.
Exhale.
Repeat.



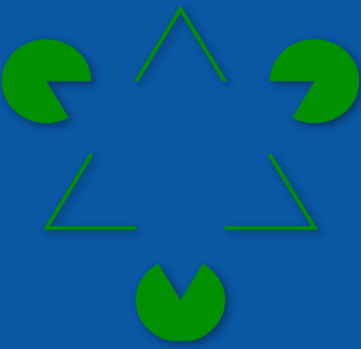
Traumatic stress

“Perceived demands are greater than the individual’s perceived coping resources”

- Stress responses occur in 4 domains
 - Cognitive
 - Emotional
 - Physiological
 - Behavioral



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MY MIND GETS TO WANDERING,
AND I BECOME TROUBLED



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Metacognitive awareness

- Looks toward thoughts & feelings
- Aware of body sensations
- Feels connected with self & others
- Attuned to environment

Dissociation

- Looks away from thoughts & feelings
- Numb to body sensations
- Feels disconnected from self & others
- Unaware of environment

Both can be protective coping strategies

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Mindfulness of thoughts

- Trauma increases past & future-focused thinking
- Mindfulness cultivates present-focused attention
- Observing thoughts flow by
- Increased clarity of seeing
- Thoughts become simply events in the mind
 - Not facts
 - Not real
 - Not current
 - Not me
 - Not true
 - **Just thoughts**

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Mindfulness of emotions

- Explore & identify emotions (detective work)
 - Attend to emotional experiences
 - Observe without clinging or pushing away
 - Reduce identification (“just” emotions, not facts)
- Practice non-judgment & acceptance
 - Befriend emotions (sitting with distress)
 - Enhance self-compassion & empathy

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You can't stop the waves,
but you can learn to surf.

Joseph Goldstein

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Mindfulness of body sensations

- Body awareness
 - “body scan” techniques
- Mindful movement
 - yoga, t'ai chi, stretching
- Grounding techniques
 - “soles of the feet” walking meditation
- Relaxation
 - breath counting, “letting go” techniques



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Mindfulness in everyday life


- Practice a few minutes of mindful awareness
 - Before doing homework
 - Doing household tasks
 - Brushing teeth
 - Washing hands
 - Eating meals
 - Listening to music
 - Walking



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Embodying mindfulness

- Attend to your own practice
 - Ground your teaching in your own experience
 - Share your own experiences
- Model mindfulness in your speech & actions
 - Practice compassionate acceptance
 - Foster authenticity, mutual respect & connection

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Why bother?

- Being present
- Seeing clearly
 - Thoughts
 - Emotions
 - Body sensations
 - Circumstances
- Making skillful choices
- Acting with intention & awareness



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Make it meaningful

- Make it relevant to what’s happening in their world
- Invoke suitable role models (celebrities, athletes)
- What’s in it for them?
 - Less worry
 - Better physical & mental health
 - Improve relationships with family or peers
 - Better performance (academically or in sports)

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Practice tips

- Start with short, simple practices
- Approximately 1 minute per year of age
- Avoid reading scripts or instructions
- Offer encouragement
- Invite participation (emphasize freedom to choose)
- Practice together
- Attend to your own practice

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There’s an app for that



iPhone
MindShift
Smiling Mind
The Mindfulness App
Stop, Breathe, and Think

“Meditation is the ultimate mobile device. You can use it anywhere, anytime, unobtrusively.”

Sharon Salzberg (2011)




Android
Headspace
Insight Timer
Mindfulness Bell
Meditation Helper

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Cultivating mindfulness (for our clients & for ourselves)

- Mindfulness promotes changes
 - Metacognitive awareness
 - Acceptance, self-compassion & empathy
 - Equanimity
- Offers opportunities
 - See clearly
 - Recognize choices
 - Choose adaptive responses




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Take-home points

1. Mindfulness is attention
 - Present-focused, non-judgmental, accepting
 - Reduces past & future-oriented thinking
2. Practicing mindfulness is not difficult
 - Remembering to practice is hard
3. We don't need to believe everything we think
 - Choices exist in the present moment
 - Choices create freedom

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“If every 8 year old
in the world is
taught meditation,
we will eliminate
violence from the
world within one
generation.”

HH the XIV Dalai Lama

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