

Mindful Psychotherapy

Seven Reasons Why A Mindful Approach to Psychotherapy is So Helpful:

1. Meditation + Therapy = Empathy + Compassion = Happy Relationships.

Mindful Psychotherapy is a unique and skillful way to work with people because it brings mindfulness practice into the relational world. Being able to maintain contact with yourself and others at the same time is what deepens your capacity for empathy and compassion.

Empathy is the key to making relationships work; it's not about getting entangled or overwhelmed by another person's emotions. Rather, it means learning to stay present with yourself while appreciating another person's experience. There is a mutual understanding that we all have our own version of reality and no one's truth is right or wrong. Compassion is not about fixing problems or changing anything. It is about being with: *"I see you. I feel you. I am here with you."* This ability to hold ourselves gently while relating to others is what increases our capacity to love, and we all know how good that feels.

2. The "work" takes place in the context of a safe and empathic relationship.

It is not just about venting your frustrations and dredging up the past. There is a positive view towards clearing obstacles from the past and creating new situations moving forward. For many people, these relational obstacles naturally fall away simply because they are no longer needed. This creates a new energetic ground from which healthier and satisfying relationships can grow. In other words, when we experience a healthy relationship from the inside out, we begin to attract more of that into our lives.

3. The therapy relationship is based on mutual respect and equality.

The basic premise from which I work is that we all have Buddha Nature (openness, awareness, and compassion). These qualities are present in all of us, all the time, no matter what is going on or how we are manifesting. Therefore, there is no judgement, "pathologizing" or hiding behind the therapist persona. One of my mentors taught me how if you see someone as whole, they will heal. If you see them as broken, they won't.

In this relationship, we're on equal footing, journeying together and exploring your inner world. If memories and feelings from the past come up, we talk about them and make sense together. This way you learn to trust your own experience while staying open to input from another.

4. You can learn how to meditate and develop a practice.

I am always happy to teach people the basics of sitting practice. Our personal mindfulness practice is so important, as if we are not able to stay in contact with ourselves we may have difficulties in our ability to maintain contact with others. It sounds paradoxical, but it is through knowing ourselves deeply that we are able to have authentic and intimate contact with other people.

5. There is an emphasis on being kind to yourself no matter what's happening.

Life is hard enough. And on top of life's challenges, we tend to give ourselves a hard time. This is not helpful; therefore, I place a strong emphasis on friendliness, gentleness and loving kindness to yourself and all aspects of your experience. This is not about being self-deceptive or avoiding responsibility. The idea is that you can't change your behavior until you can see clearly what you do.

This is a very different way of working than being directive, agenda-focused or making suggestive statements and affirmations. No matter how well-intended, these statements may collude with a deeper belief that says who I am or what I am in this moment is not good enough.

6. You can stay clear of spiritual bypassing.

After years of being a hard core meditator, I realized that while meditation and therapy work well together, they are not a substitute for each other. I loved being on retreat and feeling the bliss, but did not love coming home to find myself repeating the same old patterns.

This happens because most of our wounds and triggers occur in the context of relationship. Unless you have a very close relationship with a teacher, most of meditation practice happens in isolation. Therefore, it is very hard to access those wounds until we are in the context of intimacy again. Mindful psychotherapy helps to engage those tender and vulnerable places so that your spiritual practice is more integrated with your day-to-day life.

7. There is a new take on "goals."

Of course you want to feel like you're getting somewhere and getting something out of therapy. There is nothing wrong with having goals, but it is important that goals and aspirations come from inside you and not from anyone else's expectation. I have seen how people postpone their happiness until some imagined day when they are different from how they are now—e.g. when they lose weight, stop being so busy, feel better about themselves, etc. As long as you're fixated on either the past or the future, you cannot just relax and appreciate who you are and what you have right now.

This is a very important point to contemplate, because so much of our suffering comes from our unwillingness to accept that everything is changing all the time. There is a lot more possibility when we accept things as they are—especially those situations where we cannot do anything about external circumstances. We can always change the way we relate to our lives and so ultimately everything becomes very workable.

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