Mindfulness & Meditation in the Treatment of Addictive Behaviors
Lets take a moment....
What are our objectives today?

- Discover the essence of mindfulness practice
- Determine how mindfulness can be successfully utilized with people struggling with addictive behaviors
- Create personalized mindfulness practices for yourself and your clients
- Understand the neurological underpinnings of both addictive behavior and mindfulness
- How to effectively utilize this information to motivate clients to practice mindfulness
Nature of Mindfulness

- “Paying attention in a certain way; on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally” (Kabat-Zinn, 1990)
- A turning towards vs. away
- Describing what “is” vs. “desire”
  - Descriptive vs. judgmental
- Compassionate vs. combative/controlling
- It is remaining in the present with any and all physical, emotional, and psychological aspects of the present moment
Mindfulness Continued....

- It is a practice in redirecting the energy of "mind" and training it to manifest into ultimate health.
  - "..the mind ... (is) a process that regulates the flow of energy and information...that occurs within the body, including the brain – and relational...the flow of energy and information occurring between people..." (Daniel Siegel, MD, p. 5, 2007)
    - Energy exchanged within the person and between people and the universe at large

- "How we focus attention helps directly shape the mind." (Daniel Siegel, MD, p. 5, 2007)
  - Energy moves were we DECIDE to place it = we get what we invest in
Mindfulness Consists of....

- **Attention** - Attend/Identify/Label the moment non-judgmentally but descriptively
- **Respect** allowing whatever is happening in the moment to be as it is in its most organic form
- **Direction** of the energy of “mind” towards the present (the NOW) to bring about ultimate health
  - The present moment is where the consciousness lives and where any and ALL power of healing exists
Nature of Addiction

- An avoidance or recreation of emotional/affect states
  - Emotions/affect impacts our physiology, biology, and neurology
    - Affects are connected to belief/value systems
      - Ego syntonic/Ego dystonic
  - Groupings of affects and beliefs = attitudes and behavior

- Addictions can be viewed in part as anxiety disorders
  - Fear of affect states
    - Fear and pain/discomfort deregulate the energy of mind
    - They usher us into the future (or past) vs. the “now”

- Addictions can also be linked to fulfilling basic human needs
  - Love (e.g., belonging, connectedness, value, etc.)
  - Purpose/passion (e.g., creativity)
  - Safety (e.g., empowerment, strength, control, etc.)
Areas to Address in Choosing Effective Tx of Addictive Behaviors

- Affect recognition, regulation, and reconciliation
  - De-centering – “I am not the totality of my thoughts”
- Calming of the physiological and neurological automatic responses
  - Ability to self-sooth
- Creating new cognitive, affective, and physical relationship with the “urges/cravings” and triggers linked to the addictive behavior
- Encouraging self-efficacy and sense of empowerment
Application of Mindfulness to Addiction

- **Attention**
  - Encourage the client to identify/attend to the symptoms that trouble them the most in the MOMENT
    - Thought, Image, Idea, Memory, Physical sensation, Emotion, or a combination of all of the above
    - Focus on the strongest in the moment
    - Intention and attention of focus are the keys to achieving creative “flow” vs. the number of hours spent meditating (Lazar and Siegel 2007)
  - Obtain an exhaustive description of that which desires the attention in the moment
    - Neither agreeing/disagreeing, liking/disliking
    - First answers to these description questions are the truest....
Descriptive Questions to “Attend”

- Color?
- Size?
- Shape/Object?
- Texture?
- Temperature?
- Density? (e.g., solid, liquid, vapor, gel)
- Move/Still?
  - If moves, does it move in a pattern or erradic?
- Aroma?
- Sound?
- Taste? (e.g., bitter, sweet, sour, salty)
Respect What “Is”

- Encourage the client to simply sit quietly with whatever they have described
  - May allow themselves to see/sense it from a distance if this will allow it to be the healthiest/most beneficial to them in the moment (e.g., through the lens of a telescope)
  - May sense/see it for as long as seems healthy/beneficial
  - Allow some wandering (as mind is constantly moving) but bring back to target
- Allows for deregulating automatic responses to emotions, sensations, thoughts, etc.
  - Also encourages a sense of empowerment and self-compassion for their experience
  - Recognition that everything is temporary
Direct Towards the NOW

- Encourage “permission” to experience the sensation, thought, feeling organically/purely
  - Use words like “Imagine if you had permission to….” or “Pretend you had permission/the ability to…”
- Encourage their tolerance of whatever it is that they have described
  - “You may dislike what you are experiencing but you are handling it right NOW even if you don’t like the way you are handling it”
- Creates self-empowerment and continual deregulation from automatic responses
Let’s Practice!!!
Creating Personalized Mindfulness Exercises for Clients

- Play to the person’s interests and current level of functioning/coping
- Utilize the basic elements of mindfulness:
  - Mindfulness of feeling tone
  - Mindfulness of the body
  - Mindfulness of the environment
  - Mindfulness of the mind (thoughts/ideas)
- Adjust time spent in mindfulness (3 seconds, 33 minutes, 30 minutes, etc.)
- Adjust type of mindfulness – active/seated & quiet
- Clarify intentions and goals
  - E.g. Notice # of times in a day they are aware of their cravings, anxiety, negative thinking, etc. AND truly how intolerable is it (scale from 1-10)
Beginning Mindfulness Practices

- Promote success by giving small suggestions for active mindfulness in daily living
  - Walking
  - Eating
  - Driving
  - Household Chores
  - Office Work
  - Exercise

- Incorporate daily signals the client can utilize to recognize opportunities for mindfulness
  - Phone ringing
  - Stopping at a red light
  - Before eating
  - Utilizing the facilities
  - Set phone to tone at the beginning of each hour
Mindfulness of the Breath

- Deepen mindfulness practice by encouraging more seated mindfulness
  - Mindfulness of the breath
    - Notice the rhythm of your breath
    - Notice the sound the air makes as it enters/exits your left nostril
    - Notice the feel of the chest/belly rise and fall with each breath
    - Notice if the air you are breathing is cool/warm, dry/moist
    - Notice what it might be like to be rested in the very center of your own inhalation/exhalation
    - Say “breathing in” while breathing in and “breathing out” while breathing out inside of your own mind
Deepening Mindfulness

- **Pebble Exercise**
  - Allow for a comfortable position
  - Imagine yourself as a pebble softly and slowly moving through the water of a clear running stream
  - Allow your movement towards the sandy bottom of the stream to be unique to you; organic
  - Once you have reached the sandy bottom of the stream, notice what it feels like to be there
  - Allow in room for rest – placing worries, concerns, discomforts, negatively to be placed tenderly to the side or in a protected place for you to address when this journey is complete
  - Imagine being the smooth pebble resting in the sand and the water moves effortlessly over your mind, body, and spirit – gently ushering away any distractions, discomforts, or stress
Loving Kindness

- Imagine what it might be like to send loving kindness to:
  - A person that you love/care for deeply
  - A person that you admire (3rd party unknown)
  - A neutral person (e.g., waitress, bank teller, etc.)
  - A person that causes you mild levels of stress
  - Yourself
  - A person that causes you high levels of stress
Neurological Impact of Addictive Substance Use
Creating the Pathways

- The brain registers all pleasures in the same way, whether they originate with a psychoactive drug, a monetary reward, a sexual encounter, or a satisfying meal
  - Dopamine is released into the *nucleus accumbens* (the brain’s pleasure center)
  - Addictive drugs provide a shortcut to the brain’s reward system by flooding the nucleus accumbens with dopamine.
  - The *hippocampus* lays down memories of the rapid sense of satisfaction.
  - The *amygdala* creates a conditioned response to the stimuli.
- Repeated exposure to an addictive substance or behavior causes nerve cells in the *nucleus accumbens* AND the prefrontal cortex (the area of the brain involved in planning and executing tasks) to communicate in a way that couples *liking* something with *wanting it*. 
Impact of Addictive Substances on Neurochemical Processes


- Drugs of abuse produce such stimulation to the pleasure circuitry of the brain, that normal pleasures become dulled in comparison. (Bien and Bien, 2002.)

- Two critical areas of the brain are compromised in functioning by the prolonged use of substances (Lubman, et. Al, 2004)
  - Frontal cortical region of the orbitofrontal cortices
  - Anterior cingulate
    - These structures are associated with
      - Inhibitory control behavior (delay of immediate gratification)
      - Decision making
      - Consequential reasoning
What is the solution?

- Utilize the natural “plasticity” of the brain to create NEW pathways & connections
- Reconstruct brain circuitry in the reward, mood, and motivational centers of the brain via regular mindfulness practice.
Neurological Implications of Mindfulness on Addictive Behavior

- Mindful awareness seems to promote neural plasticity (Lazar et. al, 2005)
  - *Neural plasticity* = wiring of connections (responses) in the brain changing in response to experience
  - It deregulates automatic responses found in addictive behavioral symptoms
- Mindfulness practice increases social circuitry in the brain (Cozolino, 2006 & Goleman, 2006)
- Mindfulness practice enables individuals to regulate their emotions in a more positive manner with approach rather than withdrawal (Davidson, 2004).
- “Awareness of one’s moment-to-moment experience creates the opportunity to sense and accept one’s own mental experience directly.” = creates self-regulation and balance (Siegel, pg. 40, 2007)
Further Neurological Implications of Regular Mindfulness Practice

- Mindfulness practice may positively affect the amount of activity in the amygdala (the area in the center of the brain responsible for regulating emotions) - Davidson, 2000.
  - When the amygdala is relaxed, the parasympathetic nervous system engages to counteract the anxiety response. The heart rate lowers, breathing deepens and slows, and the body stops releasing cortisol and adrenaline into the bloodstream.

- Regular practice of mindfulness meditation can thicken the bilateral, prefrontal right-insular region of the brain (Lazar et al. 2005).
  - This is the area of the brain responsible for a sense of optimism and well-being.
  - This area is also associated with creativity and an increased sense of curiosity and the ability to be the reflective observer of “mind.”
Want more information?

Some Resources for Mindfulness are:

- Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy
  - www.mbct.com
- Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (J. Kabat-Zinn)
  - www.umassmed.edu/cfm
- Meditation & Therapy
  - www.meditationandpsychotherapy.org
  - www.mindandlife.org
- Tich Naht Hahn
  - www.plumvillage.org
  - www.iamhome.org
- Journal for Mindfulness Practitioners
  - www.inquiringmind.com
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