

Mindful-Being Psychotherapy & Increased Therapist Efficacy

In addition to mindfulness-based and mindfulness-informed therapy, I suggest a third, equally important category of mindfulness integration: the therapist's being mindful in the moment with the client, which I call *mindful-being*. Of course, I could simply call this mindful psychotherapy, but that title doesn't delineate which part of the therapy is mindful. *Mindful-being* is the therapist's way of being in session, touching every aspect of therapy, for example, what is noticed, interventions, counter-transference, compassion, or insight. This has more of a bearing on *how* the client experiences the therapist than *what* is said to the client.

I have the intention of always offering mindful-being therapy, although in some session's moments my level of mindfulness fluctuates. I believe that the most effective therapists are mindful, a point thoroughly supported in the next section. Mindfulness has been proposed as a common factor of successful therapy regardless of the therapist's theoretical approach.^{[4][5]}

Evidence suggests that the therapeutic relationship is the strongest predictor of therapeutic outcome.^{[8][9]} Lambert^[8] found that 30% of the variance in therapeutic outcome can be attributed to common factors present in most therapy (with 40% to static factors like age, gender, social support; 15% to placebo effect; and 15% to the specific treatment modality). Weinberger^[9] identified several of these common factors between distinct yet similarly effective therapies. The strongest indicators of therapeutic outcome were relationship variables. Bohart, Elliot, Greenberg, and Watson^[2] highlight empathy, congruence between therapist and client, and unconditional positive regard^[7] as characteristics leading to the most beneficial therapeutic relationship. Therefore, therapists' ability to foster a relationship built on trust, acceptance, and wisdom is likely the most important factor in helping clients moderate their suffering.^[8]

If we assume that the therapeutic relationship is one of, if not *the*, most important part of successful therapy, then therapists' development of characteristics to strengthen and maintain this relationship is paramount. Many, myself included, recommend mindfulness meditation practice as a path to therapists' developing these essential characteristics.^{[1][3][4][8]} I suggest six interrelated characteristics that strengthen the therapeutic relationship (adapted from Shapiro & Carlson^[8]) and increase therapist efficacy: attention, presence, attunement, empathy, compassion, and attitude. Mindfulness is an aide in cultivating and improving on all of these qualities. As well as strengthening relationship, these characteristics improve clinical proficiency in a variety of ways.

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