

Mindfulness as Exposure Therapy

Avoiding the Avoidance Trap

RICHARD SEARS

Mindfulness is a popular intervention these days, well-supported by clinical research and brain-scan studies. But many well-meaning clinicians use mindfulness to distract clients from unpleasant thoughts and feelings, inadvertently reinforcing the avoidance cycle, which increases struggle in the long term. This workshop will help you avoid the avoidance trap and translate research findings into powerful tools. Learn proven techniques for using mindfulness to help clients move more directly into transforming their relationship with difficult thoughts, emotions, and body sensations. You'll discover:

- Specific tools to help clients break free from the circular traps they create by fighting with their own distressing thoughts
- Concrete practices to help clients move into the body sensations that underlie strong emotions, so they can transform them from within
- How to apply a three-minute exercise to help clients quickly move into challenging thoughts, feelings, and sensations to disrupt the avoidance cycle
- Increase therapist resilience and presence with challenging clients to improve your outcomes

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Learning Objectives:

1. Use specific tools to help clients break free from the circular traps they create by fighting with their own distressing thoughts.
2. Determine how to help clients move into the body sensations that underlie strong emotions to transform them from within.
3. Perform a three-minute exercise that clients can begin practicing immediately to build resilience.

Outline:

1. Use specific tools to help clients break free from the circular traps they create by fighting with their own distressing thoughts.
 - a. Definition of clinical mindfulness
 - b. Understanding avoidance, negative reinforcement, and exposure
2. Explain how to help clients move into the body sensations that underlie strong emotions to transform them from within.
 - a. Decentering from challenging thoughts versus disputation
 - b. Exposing to bodily sensations to undercut the distraction of ruminating
3. Describe a three-minute exercise that clients can begin practicing immediately to build resilience.
 - a. Exposing to thoughts, emotions, and body sensations
 - b. Discovering and working with issues before they become overwhelming

References:

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