

The Mindful Therapist: Integrating Self Reflection and Self Regulation

Gaea Logan, MA, LPC-S

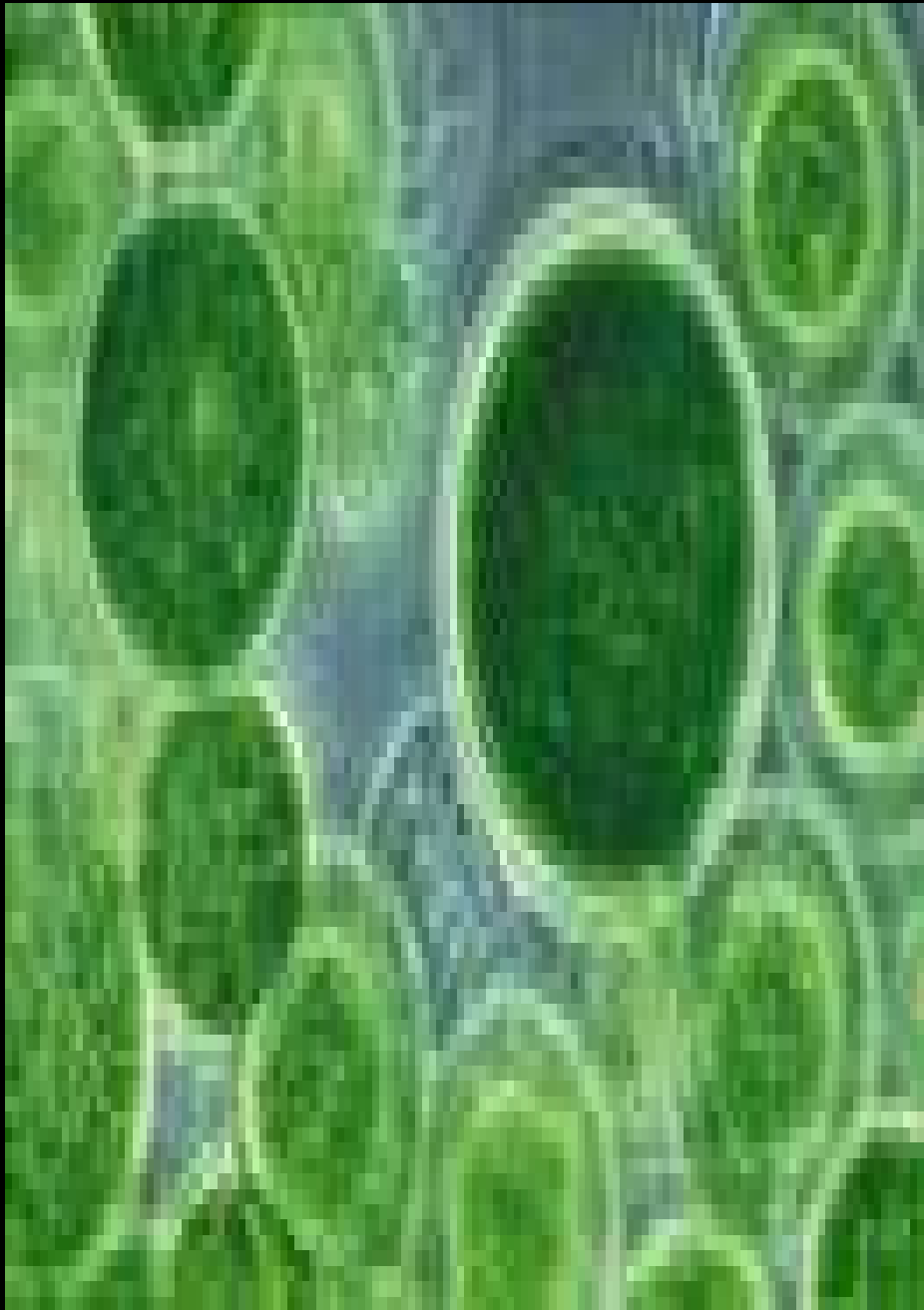
Siddharth Ashvin Shah, MD, MPH

AGPA Annual Meeting 2010

Exploring mindfulness practices that enable neural integration and resiliency.

Practicing skills and strategies for metabolizing stress and trauma.

Deepening the therapist's capacity to bear witness in the face of suffering through the development of self reflection and self regulation.



All living systems
arise out of
inter-dependent
moment to moment
conditions...
unique,
sacred
and unrepeatable
which in turn
create causes
linked to evolving
regulatory biological
processes.



Nature and nurture
weave
together
the intricate
fabric
of mind
body
and brain.



The brain consists of over 100 billion neurons, dancing in choreographies more numerous than the particles found in the universe.

Our experience of mind and body is mediated through the poly-vagal nervous system and rooted in the in- breath and the out- breath.

Contemplatives practices across cultures begin with the breathe to stabilize and transform awareness.

“ An operational working definition of mindfulness is: the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgmentally in the unfolding of experience moment by moment”

Jon Kabat Zinn, 2003

What is Mindful Awareness?

- Compassionate non-judgmental observation of the moment to moment experience
- Attention to sensation, images, feelings and thoughts as they occur (SIFT)
- Non reactivity, not clinging to judgments
- Curious relationship to the present moment
- Awareness and acceptance of ones awareness
- The ability to become aware that the mind has wandered and return again and again to the present

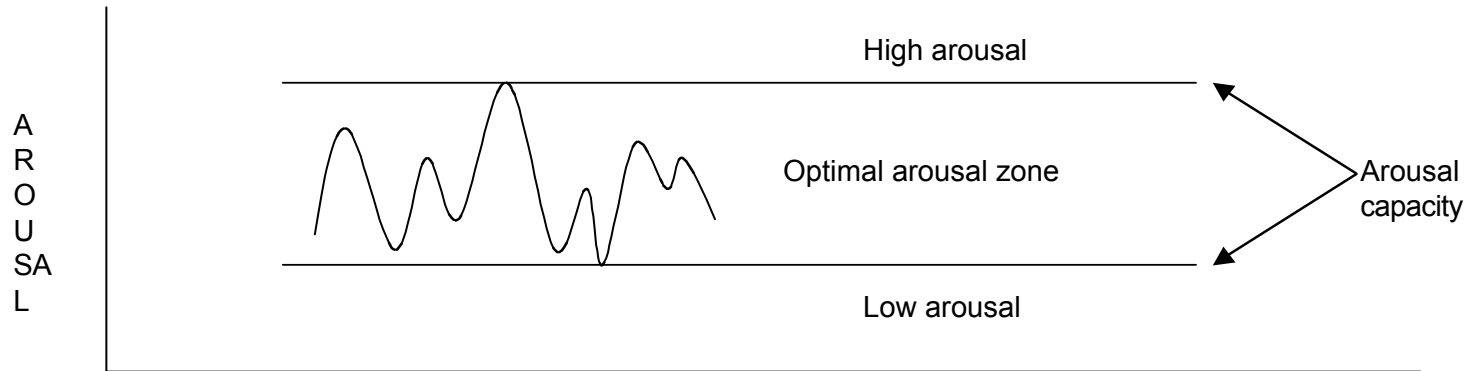
Clinical Application of Mindful Awareness Cultivates

- Presence- therapist present and affectively attuned, managing distractions, bringing self and patient into optimal window of arousal.
- Dual Attention- the capacity to micro track the moment to moment sensory experience of self /other helps contain pre affective and affective states.
- Sensory Stabilization- the experience of down-regulation or calming that occurs from bringing attention to the sensory experience
- Neural Integration harnessing the same mechanisms as secure attachment, enabling self regulation and self reflection

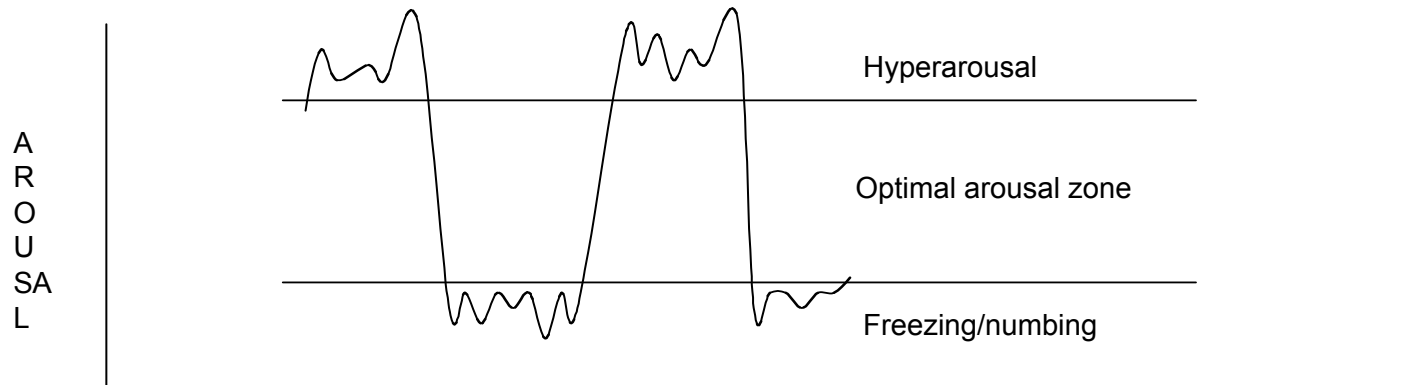
“Mindfulness in psychotherapy doesn’t just happen, it is co created between the client and the therapist as they collaborate to “follow the juice” of the session. Each intervention creates an effect that may be observed in mindfulness: and that effect may be reframed and turned into another stimulus to further deepen mindfulness and unfold the client’s process”

Kekuni Minton, PhD (2010)

Optimal Arousal Zone



Bi-phasic Trauma Response (Problematic)



“Mindfulness practice in the healing profession creates in us a state of reflection and emotional availability, essential to the heart of effective clinical work.”

Mark Epstein (1999)

The capacity for self-regulation and self-reflection evolve within the neurodevelopmental context of dyadic attachment,

the felt sense of having been held within the heart and mind of a loving, attuned and competent other.





“The baby looks
at her mother’s
face,
and finds herself
there.”

DW Winnicott

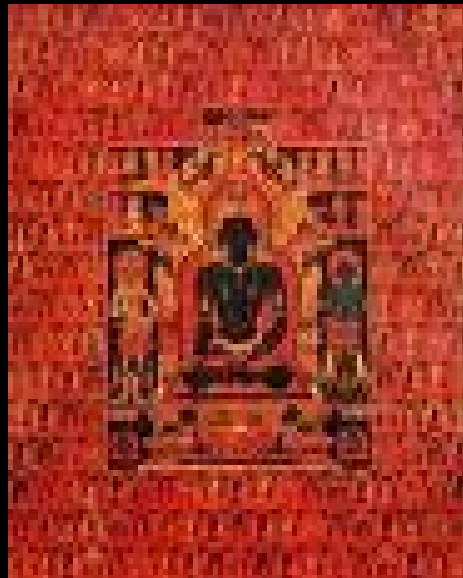
Secure attachment is derived from the care takers responsiveness, engendering a felt sense of life as bearable.

The mother “minds the baby”.

The mindful therapist “minds the moment”.

In this sensibility
reflection, regulation and resilience are born.

“The capacity to hold
mind in mind
is as ancient
as human relatedness
and self awareness”

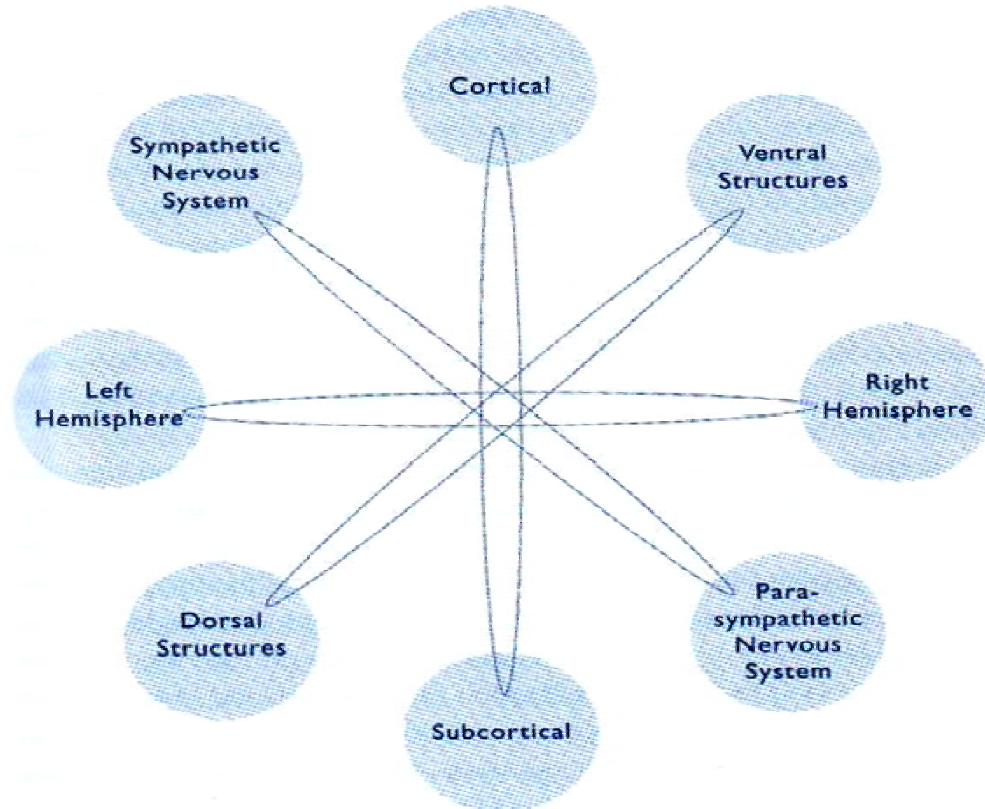


Peter Fonagy (2006)

“Mindful awareness and
secure attachment
harness the same neural
mechanisms”

Daniel Siegel, MD (2006)

Neural Integration



Mindfulness helps cultivate the self regulation of attention, deepening reflective processing through...

- decreased reactivity to inner experience
- increased attention and differentiation of sensation, images feelings, and thoughts (SIFT) (discernment and integration)
- acting with explicit awareness and rather than implicit, automatic or procedural memory
- increased ability to describe and label with words
- developing a “proximal space” between self and experience
- the development of neural integration

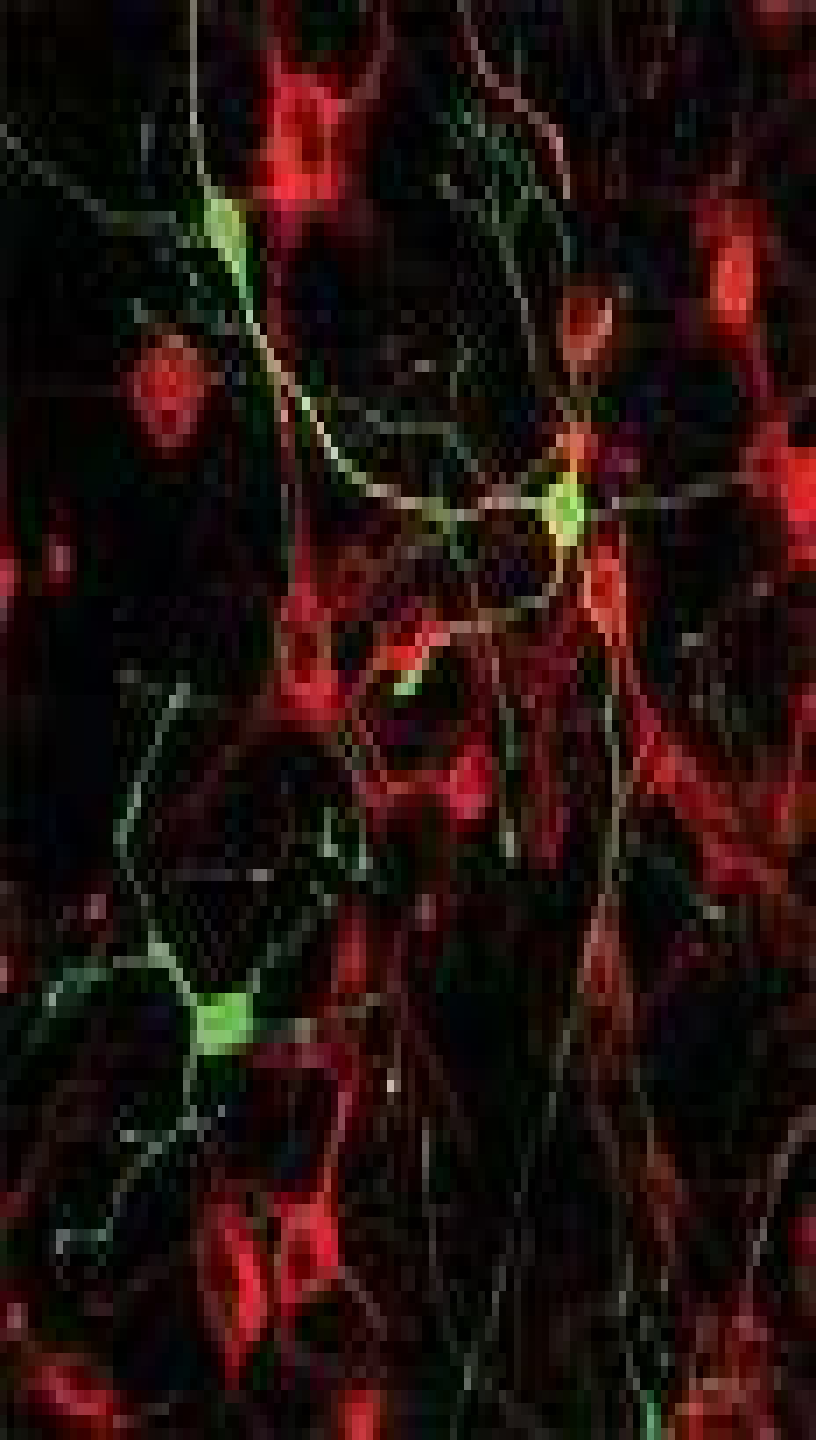
Characteristics of Healthy Neural Integration

- Regulation of the body's physical reactions
- Regulation of emotion
- Emotionally attuned interpersonal communication with others (often involving eye contact)
- Response flexibility- rebalancing attention to take in new information, capacity to shift foreground to background (sitting with the unknown)
- Self awareness- noting the precious moment our minds have wandered
- Coherency of the autobiographical narrative
- Morality

The German Study

Psychotherapists-in-training who underwent brief Zen training had significantly better therapy outcomes in a double blind 9 wk study in the areas of:

- somatization
- anxiety
- social insecurity
- obsessiveness
- anger/hostility
- paranoia
- psychosis



Neurogenesis

Grounding

Sensory Stabilization

Mindful Awareness Practice

Formal Practice

Informal Practice