

Mindfulness Meets Recovery: Transforming Anger and Impulse Control through MBCT

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Mindfulness



“Mindfulness is paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally.”

Jon Kabat-Zinn, founder of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction



Mindfulness Is...

Mindfulness is the ability to maintain an objective or unbiased awareness of one's own thoughts, emotions, and behaviors in the present moment.

“Mindfulness is much more than present-moment awareness. Mindfulness includes and facilitates the cultivation of concentration, wisdom, and the ability to make healthy choices that foster genuine happiness and a meaningful life.” – John Bruna, co-founder of Mindfulness in Recovery



Mindfulness Is Not...

- Mindfulness is not about changing difficult thoughts or getting rid of difficult feelings.
- Mindfulness is not about spacing out.
- Mindfulness is not the absence of thought.
- Mindfulness is not relaxation.

Teasdale, J., Williams, M., & Segal, Z. (2014). *The mindful way workbook: An 8-week program to free yourself from depression and emotional distress*. The Guilford Press.

Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT)

MBCT is an evidence-based therapy combining mindfulness exercises with traditional Cognitive Behavior Therapy



Elements of Mindfulness Practice Embedded in MBCT

- Cultivation of awareness.
- Attitude of non -striving and acceptance.
- Understanding of human vulnerability
- Mindfulness is not relaxation.

Teasdale, J., Williams, M., & Segal, Z. (2014). *The mindful way workbook: An 8-week program to free yourself from depression and emotional distress*. The Guilford Press.



4 Ways Mindfulness Can Be Helpful for Clients

- Fosters awareness
- Cultivates present-moment experience
- Develops 'choicefulness'
- Improves affect tolerance

Segal, Z (2013, November) A day of mindful practice to enhance your clinical practice. *47th ABCT Annual Convention*, Nashville, TN



MBCT is an Evidence-Based Approach

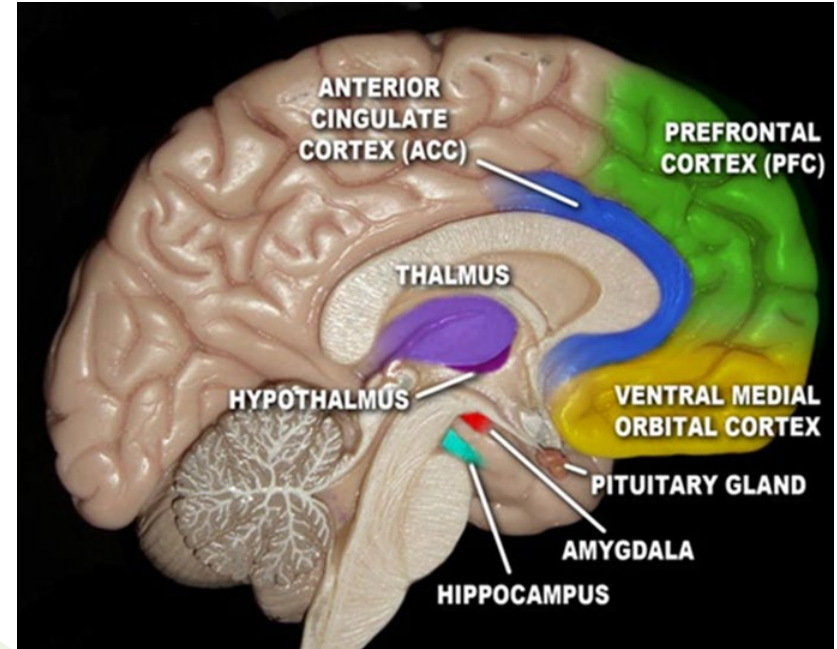
- Reduction of depressive symptoms by 30-35%
- Efficacy equal to that of antidepressant medication.
- Craving reduction
- Mindfulness approaches lead to structural changes in the brain.
- Associated with decreased rumination.
- Decrease in anxious thoughts

(Badpa et al; 2019; Chiesa & Serretti, 2014; Ghahari et al., 2020; Hawley et al., 2014; Kakko et al., 2019)

Anger

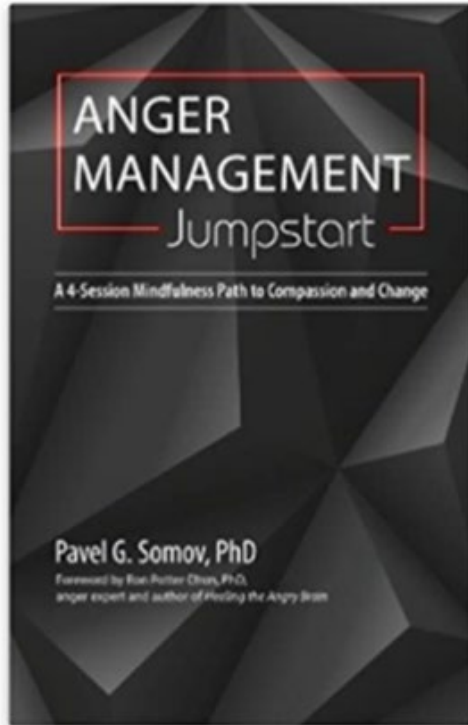
Anger is rooted in the 'emotional' brain.

Neurobiology of Anger



Nunn, K., Hanstock, T., & Lask, B. (2008). *Who's who of the brain: A guide to its inhabitants, where they live and what they do.* Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

MBCT Anger Management Group



- Impulse Control Training
- Choice Awareness Training
- Symbolic Threat Inoculation
- Bottom-Up Self-Regulation

Somov, P. G. (2013). *Anger management jumpstart: A 4-session mindfulness path to compassion and change*. Pesi Publishing and Media.




MBCT Anger Management Group

- Brief anger assessment

PROMIS Emotional Distress- Anger –
Short Form 5a

Shamatha meditation

Pilkonis, P. A., Choi, S. W., Reise, S. P., Stover, A. M., Riley, W. T., Cella, D., & PROMIS Cooperative Group. (2011). Item banks for measuring emotional distress from the Patient-Reported Outcomes Measurement Information System (PROMIS®): depression, anxiety, and anger. *Assessment*, 18(3), 263-283.





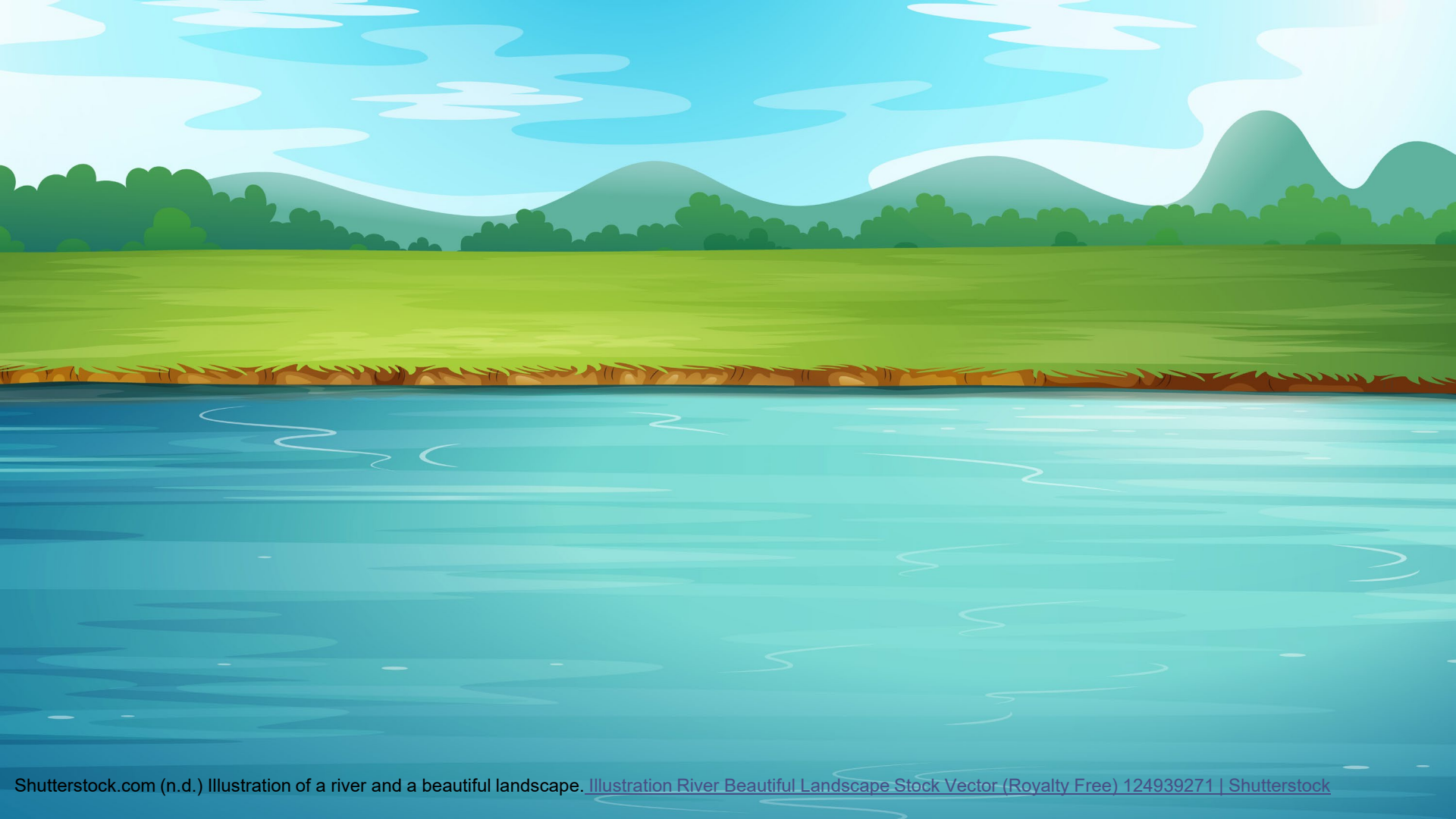
Session 1: Impulse Control Training

- Learning to live in the gap between the “emotional” brain and the “thinking brain.” (Somov, 2013)

It is not about suppressing anger impulse; it's about learning to witness the impulse pass on its own.

Somov, P. G. (2013). *Anger management jumpstart: A 4-session mindfulness path to compassion and change*. Pesi Publishing and Media.







Session 1: Homework

Practice Watching Your Mind

Practice the “riverbank” attitude once or twice each day for a few minutes.

Practice witnessing any urges or impulses you encounter during the week.

Spend a few minutes on the “riverbank” in front of your food before each meal.

Never mind the mind – whenever you catch yourself having an angry thought, just notice and release it.

Somov, P. G. (2013). *Anger management jumpstart: A 4-session mindfulness path to compassion and change*. Pesi Publishing and Media.





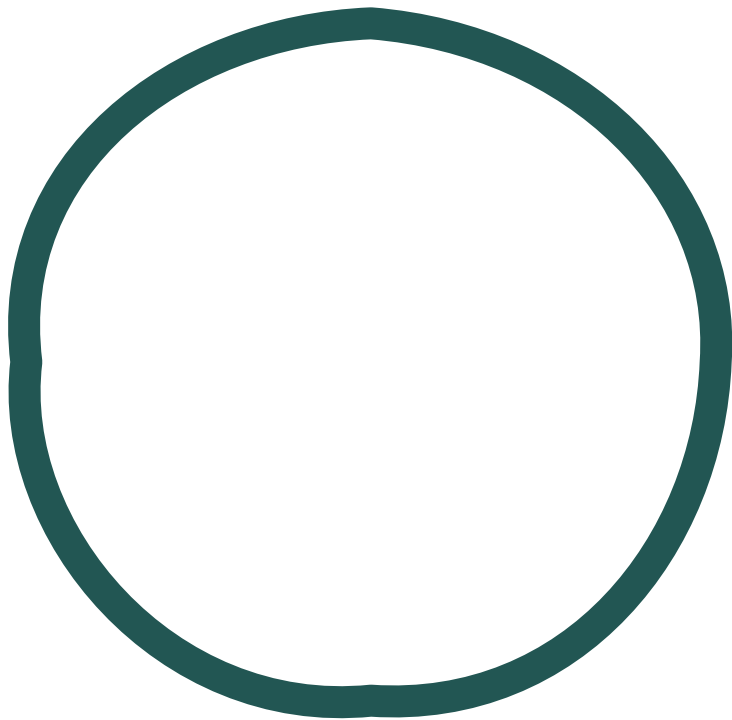
Session 2: Choice Awareness Training

- Recent findings in neuroplasticity suggest that brain hardware can be softened up

Choice is action. Choice is behavior. Choice is change

Somov, P. G. (2013). *Anger management jumpstart: A 4-session mindfulness path to compassion and change*.
Pesi Publishing and Media.







Session 2: Homework

Practice Choice Awareness

Practice drawing mindful, choice-aware circles every day.

Practice drawing a mindful circle before something important.

Practice breaking a pattern - Use your non-dominant hand while eating.

Choose to not defend yourself when criticized or accused.

Choose to remain silent when arguing.

Choose to apologize or say "sorry."

Choose to ask questions rather than assert positions.

Choose to lower your voice.

Choose to not use all-or-nothing language.

Wear your watch on the "wrong" wrist as a reminder that you don't always have to react the same way.

Somov, P. G. (2013). *Anger management jumpstart: A 4-session mindfulness path to compassion and change*.
Pesi Publishing and Media.





Session 3: Symbolic Threat Inoculation

- The hidden power of thinking: thoughts and feelings (Teasdale et al., 2014).

Exposure-based intervention designed to help you become fundamentally more resilient to all kinds of disses. (Somov, 2013)

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Teasdale, J., Williams, M., Segal, Z. (2014). *The mindful way workbook*. Guildford Press.





Session 3: Homework

The Hidden Power of Thinking

Keep a thought log – situation/thought/feeling
Custom mind disapproval

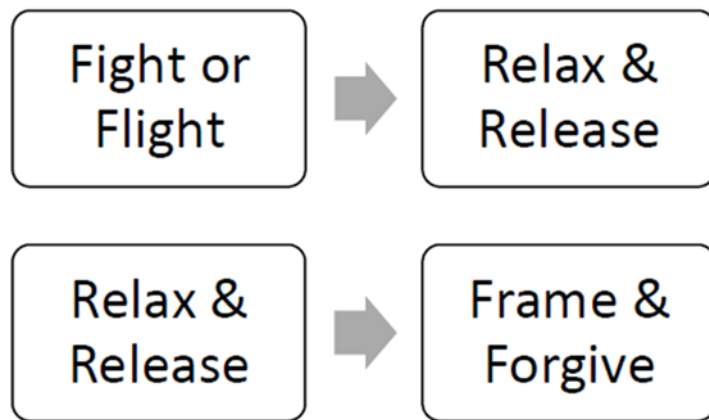
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Session 4: Bottom-Up Self-Regulation

- self-regulation shortcuts. (Somov, 2013)



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Session 4: Homework

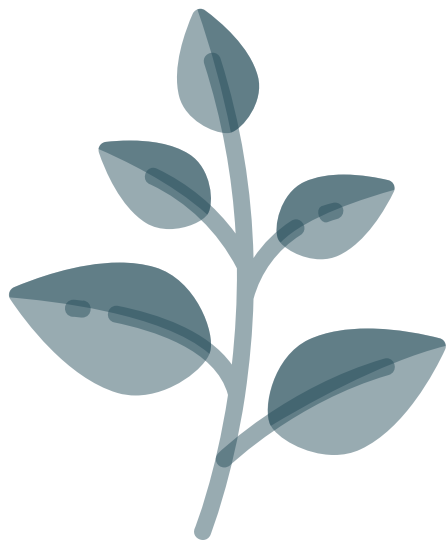
Practice

Open Your Hand to Open Your Mind
Humful Breath
Sky Gaze

Somov, P. G. (2013). *Anger management jumpstart: A 4-session mindfulness path to compassion and change*.
Pesi Publishing and Media.



7 Skills of Living Mindfully in Recovery



- Values
- Attention
- Wisdom
- Equanimity
- Compassion
- Loving-Kindness
- Action

Thank You!

