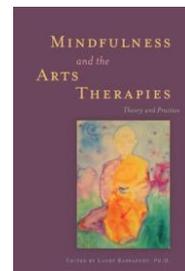


Book review

Mindfulness and the Arts Therapies: Theory and Practice (Laury Rappaport, Editor)

Reviewed by Foteini Athanasiadou



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Mindfulness can be traced back to Buddhism 2,500 years ago and since then it has taken various forms both within and external to religious contexts. Nowadays, mindful practices and techniques have been successfully incorporated into modern western culture and lifestyles within educational, mental health and community contexts. Mindfulness which is underpinned by awareness and acceptance of the present moment, compassion and a non-judgmental way of being suggests the state of the quiet mind that affects overall wellbeing. In addition, there is clinical evidence and research regarding the positive outcomes of mindfulness in people's physical and emotional resilience, social and cognitive skills and spiritual enhancement (Caldwell 2014; Kabat-Zinn 2003). At the same time, arts therapies have been developed substantially as a creative approach to psychotherapy offering - through evidence-based practices - therapeutic change, integration of the emotional, social, mental, physical and spiritual aspects of one's self and a better sense of wellbeing (Karkou, Oliver & Lycouris in preparation; Karkou & Sanderson 2006; Payne 2006).

What happens when these two fields meet each other? How can the expressive aspects of arts therapies be combined with the more esoteric aspects of mindfulness? *Mindfulness and the Arts Therapies: Theory and Practice* is a book that thoroughly describes how mindful practices and creative therapies are integrated creating a continuum of psychotherapeutic methods. Laury Rappaport, originator of the FOAT (Focusing-Oriented Expressive Arts) method and editor of this multiple-authors book, invited international clinicians to contribute to the book proposing new ways of establishing a therapeutic relationship and achieving transformation and healing within the therapeutic space.

The book is comprised of six parts:

- ❑ Part I: an overview of mindfulness; how mindfulness has been practised in various religions and how it has influenced psychotherapy;
- ❑ Part II: discussion of the concepts of witnessing and intention in the therapeutic space and their role to promote self-reflection and awareness,

artistic expression and internal peace;

- Part III: theoretical reviews and clinical applications of creative psychotherapeutic approaches combined with mindful practices; the chapters explore the use of drawing, voice, embodiment, poetry, music and dramatic enactment in combination with meditative silence, mindful breath and awareness of the present moment to achieve pain relief, meaning-making, mental and emotional wellbeing and spiritual growth;
- Part IV: accounts of mindful-based therapies that use creative mediums, such as movement and drawing. Clinical applications describe the implementation and effectiveness of Authentic Movement, Focusing-Oriented Arts Therapy, Hakomi & Art Therapy and Mindful-based Expressive Arts Therapy to heal people coping with diverse physical and emotional issues. In all cases, there are references to the principles underlying these mindful-based therapeutic approaches;
- Part V: the use of mindfulness within a training framework for art therapy and dance movement therapy students; and
- Part VI: input from a clinical neuroscience perspective; an extensive and comprehensive description of the “polyvagal theory” (Porges 2001) and its link to different ways of coping with stress; moreover, the chapter includes a discussion regarding the therapeutic use of arts and mindfulness and its link to evidence coming from the neuroscience field.

In addition, the book includes coloured illustrations which support case studies, a resource section containing a selection of mindfulness exercises and pieces of music and a section with the authors’ brief biographies. Both the subject and author index in the end of the book are helpful.

This is a pioneering book in the field of psychotherapy that successfully achieves to convey the value of inner listening, compassion, awareness of the here-and-now moment and creativity in psychotherapeutic practice. All chapters include theoretical frameworks supported by updated theory and research as well as enlightening clinical applications. A broad spectrum of professionals, students and researchers would benefit from the proposed therapeutic methods developed by therapists who have been developing and applying them throughout their professional careers.

From a personal perspective, I believe that what gives additional value to the book is the fact that

the authors disclose their personal experience with mindfulness and the artistic media, and they explain how their experience shaped their approach to psychotherapy. Additionally, there is diversity in the case studies regarding the clinical populations and settings. Overall, the book has effectively achieved to convey new thinking and possibilities regarding the psychotherapeutic process. Quoting from the book’s foreword:

“Mindfulness creatively joined with the new therapies offers a stream of helping and compassionate services for something very old. If the newness of this is taken beyond these words and disciplines, that very stream will become the ocean” (Rappaport 2014, p.13).

Having read the book, I once again confirmed to myself the significance of non-intrusiveness in both the therapeutic and self-relationship, as well as the inspiring and limitless potency of the creative therapies.

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