

is apparent. In this slim volume, she clearly communicates a huge amount of information, whilst exemplifying the qualities of a skilful mindfulness teacher. She shares something of the story of her own development as a practitioner and teacher, and her ongoing journey alongside those she works with and teaches. She conveys a sense of interconnectedness, humbly placing her work in the context of that which has influenced it. The whole text is imbued with those qualities of commitment, open-minded curiosity and non-judgement called for in mindfulness practice and inquiry.

In the introduction, the author emphasizes the limitations of the endeavour of describing mindfulness in words, and the need for direct experience and non-conceptual knowledge. Having set out her remit, she fulfils it extremely well, making judicious use of well-chosen quotes, case examples, references and directions to further resources.

The first half of the book describes the theoretical basis of mindfulness-based cognitive therapy and places it in context, drawing together its roots in Buddhist thinking and cognitive theory. It also provides a brief overview of the relevant evidence base. The second half, like the processes of mindfulness practice and inquiry themselves, moves between specific and broader foci, describing in detail what happens in MBCT, and articulating and exemplifying the spirit of the programme.

This book provides a very clear description of what MBCT is and is not. It assumes no prior knowledge, and so would be an excellent introduction for practitioners completely new to the field and looking for an overview of its essence and what it involves. Similarly, it would be a valuable resource for service managers and commissioners seeking an understanding of MBCT. It is also a book that would repay reflective re-reading by practitioners as their experience of mindfulness grows.

It is part of the Distinctive Features series, edited by Windy Dryden, and the author makes good use of the structure this imposes, of 15 very short chapters on distinctive theoretical features and 15 on distinctive practical features. Each chapter can be read alone, making the book an excellent reference resource. It could be used to support reflection on particular aspects of the theory, or specific practices used in MBCT, by practitioners at all stages of their development.

This is a book of great value, as a reference work and a text to be read straight through, for beginning and more advanced practitioners in MBCT and others seeking an understanding of the area, and it comes highly recommended.

JANE HUTTON

South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust

Clinical Handbook of Mindfulness

Fabrizio Didonna (Ed.)

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Mindfulness as defined by Jon Kabat Zinn is paying attention in a particular way, on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgementally. But it is also, as Kabat Zinn himself admits in the foreword to this large and comprehensive multi-authored book, used by his group “as an umbrella term that subsumes all the other elements of the Eightfold Noble Path, and indeed of the dharma itself. . .” (p. xxviii). This tension between mindfulness as a technique or natural phenomenon of attentional regulation, and mindfulness as a component of a philosophical

system that offers a radical way of being in the world, runs through this book and indeed the whole mindfulness movement. Can mindfulness be extracted from the Buddhist context in which it originated as a concept? If so, what is it and what is the new context in which we locate it in Western clinical practice? But another dilemma also runs through the whole of this book: how it is possible to use words to describe a way of attending that is ultimately non-conceptual and experiential.

The book is divided into four parts. In Part 1 “Theory, conceptualization and phenomenology” the basic concepts of mindfulness are discussed. There is a very accessible chapter by Siegel and colleagues on what mindfulness is and where it came from and a concise summary by Treadway and Lazar of the neurobiology of mindfulness. Part 2, “Clinical applications: general issues, rationale and phenomenology”, is a rather mixed section, where I suspect the editor placed a number of chapters that were not easily classified. It contains an interesting chapter by the editor on how mindfulness can be used with feelings of emptiness – a symptom reported in a number of personality disorders, and difficult to work with using traditional cognitive methods. There is a chapter by Baer and colleagues that helpfully reviews the instruments for assessing mindfulness. This part also includes a timely reminder by Kocovski and colleagues that mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT) is not a general purpose therapeutic technology, but may work best when applied within a specific problem formulation for a given disorder. Part 3, “Mindfulness-based interventions for specific disorders”, covers several disorders: anxiety disorders, OCD, depression, borderline personality disorder, eating disorders, addictions, PTSD, ADHD, psychosis, chronic pain, and oncology. This may be the section that is of most interest to the cognitive behaviour therapist who wishes to understand how to apply MBCT and MBSR in clinical practice. The therapist will find some useful tips on how the standard programme is adapted for different problems. Most, though not all, of these chapters contain case examples that bring to life the application to real individuals. The final section, “Mindfulness-based interventions for specific settings and populations”, describes mindfulness in individual psychotherapy, with children, older adults, inpatients, and with health care professionals. The appendix, “Mindfulness practice”, gives brief guidance to the forms of meditative practice within this tradition.

Inevitably a book with so many authors is variable in style, but I found all the chapters very readable, and all open a window onto one or more aspects of the practice. This volume will probably be of most interest to a clinician who already has some understanding of mindfulness and who is interested in a clinically based overview of how it is blossoming in ever increasing areas. I was struck, however, by how few randomized controlled trials there still are for an approach that has attracted so much attention. And, for a way of being that cannot be put into words, there are a lot of words in 523 pages.

STIRLING MOOREY

South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust

The Mindful Path to Self-Compassion: Freeing Yourself from Destructive Thoughts and Emotions

Christopher K. Germer

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Recent years have seen the inclusion of Eastern ideas into Western therapies and an increasing awareness that the cognitive behavioural emphasis on effort and activity can sometimes