

The nature of experiences, that is the nature of emotions and their function, is briefly touched upon. No distinction is made between a healthy and non-healthy negative emotional experience. Normalisation and validation of negative emotions are mentioned but the book does not explain that this is a key element of group interventions like MBCT and MBSR. To put group interventions like MBCT together with individual approaches like ACT under one umbrella called “ABBT” requires further discussion, which this book does not offer. A paragraph on the evolutionary value of emotions and their functional unhelpfulness in case of an emotional disorder would have been essential to hammer home the ingenious concept of experiential avoidance.

I am somewhat concerned that various meditation techniques, often drawn from MBSR or MBCT, are taken out of their carefully designed original context and are presented as a technique that can be just “read out” to the patient. The theory underlying MBSR and MBCT is that the therapist is a meditation practitioner who, to some degree, embodies and models the paradoxical intervention of “changing experience by not trying to change it”. This is contrasted with the ACT approach of making this skill accessible in a more psycho-educational way. ABBT is trying to integrate therapy approaches that could be seen as incompatible (e.g. MBCT and relaxation).

The chapter on valued action, drawn from ACT, is strong. In conjunction with the self-monitoring sheets provided, they add to our understanding of the importance of values and valued action in behavioural and emotional change. Any CBT practitioner will benefit from learning more about how to integrate a discussion about values into their therapy.

Overall, this book is of value to learn about a third wave approach towards emotional distress: to find out that our relationship with our emotional experience may be impaired and to develop a different way to relate to the internal universe. Unfortunately, the book is not as practical as it claims and I struggled to get into it. It is of use to the CBT practitioner who tries to expand his or her skill base into third wave techniques without having to develop a personal meditation practice. The debate between more behavioural approaches like ACT as a “fast track” into de-fusion, or as Teasdale calls it, meta-cognitive awareness, and the more long-winded meditative route, as found in MBCT, remains unresolved. The authors leave it up to research evidence to decide this debate. Until then, we may have to live with the fact that there may be many, sometimes apparently mutually exclusive paths to the holy grail of meta-cognitive awareness and de-fusion.

Reference

Clark, D. M. (1986). A cognitive approach to panic. *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, 24, 461–470.

FLORIAN RUTHS
South London and Maudsley Trust

Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy

Rebecca Crane

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This concise, rich, readable and balanced text is an important addition to the literature on mindfulness-based approaches. Rebecca Crane’s depth and breadth of experience of the field

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.)

New York: Springer, 2009. pp. 523. £75.50 (hb). ISBN: 978-0-387-09592-9.

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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