Mindfulness with Judeo-Christian Student Populations

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Outline

- Importance of Spiritual/Religious Values
- Conflict Between Client & Counseling Interventions
- Defining Mindfulness
- A New Approach
- Suggested Practices, Approaches, & Ideas
- Closing & Questions
The “Dangers” of Mindfulness
Religious Preference in US (Gallup, 2014)

- Protestant/Christian: 50
- Catholic: 16
- Mormon: 3
- Jewish: 2
- Muslim: 2
- Other non-Christian religion: 3
- None/Atheist/Agnostic: 1
- No response: 1

**Total:** 96

**Percentage:**
- Protestant/Christian: 51.56%
- Catholic: 16.67%
- Mormon: 3.12%
- Jewish: 2.08%
- Muslim: 2.08%
- Other non-Christian religion: 3.12%
- None/Atheist/Agnostic: 1.04%
- No response: 1.04%
Religious Preference in US (Gallup, 2014)

- Protestant/Christian decline from 1950’s high of 71%
- Those professing religious preference 90%+ Christian

- Approx 78% Judeo-Christian congruent religious preference
FOUNDATION

Importance of Spiritual / Religious Values
Religion as a Problem Solver in US  

(Gallup, 2017)
Client Religion/Spirituality

- Understanding the Values of Religious Clients: A Model and Its Application to Counseling (Worthington, 1988)
- Religious Counseling: To Be Used, Not Feared (Mattson, 1994)
Client Religion/Spirituality

- Inclusion of spirituality as a component of perceived counselor effectiveness (Cashwell, 2001)
- Spirituality and religion as adaptive, growth-oriented qualities fitting within human growth & development vs pathology (Parker, 2011)
- Counselors may neglect spirituality when working with children & adolescents (Muselman & Wiggins, 2012)
- Spirituality emerging as source of strength or confusion in midst of trauma [i.e., grief] for children & adolescents (Muselman & Wiggins, 2012)
Client Religion/Spirituality

- Providing Counseling Services & Intervention (ASERVIC, 2009)

  o 2 The professional counselor recognizes that the client’s beliefs (or absence of beliefs) about spirituality and/or religion are central to his or her worldview and can influence psychosocial functioning.

  o 8 The professional counselor uses spiritual and/or religious concepts that are consistent with the client’s spiritual and/or religious perspectives and are acceptable to the client.

  o 13 The professional counselor is able to a) modify therapeutic techniques to include a client’s spiritual and/or religious perspectives, and b) utilize spiritual and/or religious practices as techniques when appropriate and acceptable to a client’s viewpoint.
K-12 Client Religion/Spirituality

- Recognized as a component of student diversity (ASCA, 2016)
- Supporting student development, Professional School Counselors respect students’ values & beliefs (ASCA, 2016)
POTENTIAL PROBLEM

Conflict with Client Worldview & Mindfulness Interventions
Historical Tensions

- Explicit theoretical assertions (e.g., Freud, Skinner, Ellis) (Vandenberghe & Prado, 2009; Zinnbauer & Pargament, 2000)

- Two-Way Street; esp re: behavioral tradition (Hathaway & Tan, 2009)

- Potential client concern how counselor will respond to beliefs impacting willingness to discuss, and feeding fear that counselor may undermine or convert (Hannon, 1994; Miller, 1995; Morrison, Clutter, Pritchett, & Demmitt, 2009)
Exacerbated in the K-12 Setting

- Power differential inherent in the school setting

- Dichotomous & dogmatic conceptualization of “separation of church & state”

- Curricula re: Morals, Values, & Beliefs
  - “Null Curriculum” (Eisner, 1985)
  - “Hidden Curriculum” re: morals & values (Kohlberg, 1983)
Leading to a Potential Problem?

- When have you encountered tension and/or conflict surrounding students’ religion, faith, spirituality?

- When has parent/guardian religion, faith, spirituality played a role in school counseling interventions/services?
Leading to a Potential Problem?

- Thus, it might be easily conceived that for some clients, their espoused Judeo Christian beliefs, practices, worldview, may hinder if not prevent involvement with mindfulness practices (Ford & Garzon, 2017; Frederick & White, 2015)
MINDFULNESS

Exploring a Working Definition of Mindfulness
Mindfulness

- Theoretical Sources
  - Eastern Philosophical Roots (i.e., Buddhism)
  - Western Tradition with Distinct Differences (i.e., Langer & Education)
  - Malleable Perspectives
  - Novelty Production
Mindfulness

▪ Paying attention in a particular way (Kabat-Zinn, 2006)

▪ Tranquil heart & clear mind.

  “A palace guard who is aware of every face that passes through the front corridor”
  (Thich Nhat Hanh, 2008)

▪ Maintained attention on the present moment, with an orientation of curiosity, openness, and acceptance (Tan, 2011)

▪ Guarding against McMindfulness (Kabat-Zinn, 2006)
Mindfulness in Schools

- Growth & Expansion of Mindfulness in Schools
  - Mindful Schools
  - .b
  - mindUP
  - BREATHE
  - Smilingmind

- UK: Government funding exploring mindfulness interventions
- US: More organic & disparate implementation
A NEW APPROACH

Mindfulness Aligned with a Judeo-Christian Worldview
Engaging Dialogue

- When students/parents express the importance of their faith and/or potential concern about mindfulness practices

  1. Recognizing their values and beliefs
  2. Underscoring **NOT** intending to proselytize
  3. Explicitly communicating goal of MBI/curriculum
  4. Discussing parallels between MBIs and Judeo Christian practices
Mindfulness

Purposeful, non-judgmental, present-moment awareness incorporating novelty production

- Purposeful
- Non-Judgmental
- Present-Moment Awareness
- Novelty Production
Mindfulness

Purposeful, non-judgmental, present-moment awareness incorporating novelty production

- Prayer
  - Purposeful: dedicated time/energies
  - Non-J: detached from emotions
  - Present-moment: centered. Focused on what doing now.
  - Novelty: Thy will, not mine. “desires of your heart”
PRACTICES & IDEAS

Approaches for Integrating Mindfulness within the K-12 Setting
4 Keys to Remember

Purposeful, non-judgmental, present-moment awareness incorporating novelty production

1. Dedicated time & energies
2. Focused breathing to calm and increase oxygenation
3. Awareness of physical, emotional, and mental self
4. Building/expanding awareness towards others
## Parallels Between Practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inherently Buddhist</th>
<th>Judeo Christian Perspective</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meditation</td>
<td>Contemplative Prayer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yoga</td>
<td>Body Fit/Exercise; Body Scan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Guided Breathing</td>
<td>Focused Breathing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mandalas</td>
<td>Coloring/Journaling</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Strategies & Techniques

Substituting for curricula with overt Buddhist aspects
- Focused Breathing
- Body Scan / Tension & Relaxation Exercises
- Inspirational Readings
- Sacred Texts
- Contemplative Thought/Prayer
- Faith detached from emotions
- Journaling
4 Keys to Remember

Purposeful, non-judgmental, present-moment awareness incorporating novelty production

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THANK YOU

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