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Mindfulness....for POTS and Syncope?

Heart Rhythm Congress 2017
Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

- Developed by Aaron Beck in the 1960s
- Persistent dysfunctional attitudes and assumptions cause problematic emotions and behaviors
- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

- Our thoughts, feelings and actions are all linked
- We can change our thoughts and actions to impact feelings
- “FIX” oriented
Problems with the model?

- CBT model geared toward “fixing”
- BUT: “My life is impaired – how can I ‘think’ myself better?”
- BUT: “I cannot change the way things are”
Problems with the model: research

- CBT Model found to lack empirical support
- Much of the improvement comes from:
  - Changing the patient’s relationship to negative thoughts and emotions
  - Reducing negative ruminations
  - Behavioral interventions
An Acceptance Based Therapy?

- No problem focused “quick fix”
- Live in the moment
- Live as well as possible
- Maximize quality of life
- “I cannot change things, but I can make the most of every moment”
What is Mindfulness?

THE MINDFUL COUPLE
How Acceptance and Mindfulness Can Lead You to the Love You Want

Cat Mulan’s MINDFUL MUSINGS
Insight and Inspiration for a Wonderful Life

THE MINDFUL BROKER

THE MINDFUL ADDICT
A Memoir of the Awakening of a Spirit

THE MINDFUL ATHLETE
SECRETS TO PURE PERFORMANCE
GEORGE MUMFORD
Mindfulness

- “Pay deliberate attention in the moment to what is going on in our mind, body and day to day life without judgement”

- Mindfulness encourages:
  - Ability to recognize emotion
  - Ability to disengage from emotion
  - Reduced rumination on negative cognitions
What does it help?

- Reduces anxiety and negative affect
- Reduces emotional reactivity
- Improves focus
- Lowers BP
- Improves sleep
- Improvements in immune function
What else does it help?

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Chronic Pain
- Substance Use Disorders
- Eating disorders
- Adjunct Rx in ADHD and Psychosis
- Chronic illnesses
  - Varying magnitude of benefit across studies
  - Reduced stress
  - Moderately improved depression

- ....and empathy/reduction in physician error!
How mindfulness is helping me with a debilitating illness: my story
thoughtbrick.com/meditation/mindfulness-helping-debilitating-illness-story/Cached

May 12, 2014 - postural orthostatic tachycardia syndrome and cerebral hypofusion. It is a strange fact of life that the things that affect us most are often those ...

Dealing with the Darkness of Chronic Illness: How Mindfulness Helps ...
www.everyday-mindfulness.org/dealing-with-the-darkness-of-chronic-illness-how-mi...Cached

Jun 10, 2015 - I have postural orthostatic tachycardia syndrome, characterised by chronic dysfunction of the autonomic nervous system – the bit that controls ...

How mindfulness has helped me cope with chronic illness related ...
spooniesophia.com/.../how-mindfulness-has-helped-me-cope-with-chronic-illness-rela...Cached

Aug 22, 2014 - Just over a month ago now I was diagnosed with postural orthostatic tachycardia syndrome (POTS), a debilitating chronic illness which ...
And finally a study!

- 22 teens with POTS
- 6 sessions of Mindfulness based stress reduction versus video online support group
- Both groups benefitted with reduced anxiety, depression and stress ratings. Coping improved.
- Unable to show mindfulness superior to group support
- Mindfulness group had significantly higher anxiety at baseline
What about syncope? Case reports

- 21 year old female with injury scene syncope
  - Responded to skeletal muscle tensing and cognitive skills (1981, Kozac and Montgomery)

- 37 year old male with injury scene syncope
  - Responded to CBT and leg muscle tensing (1985, Kozac and Miller)

- 30 year old male with recurrent vasovagal syncope
  - Utilized relaxation, CBT, and biofeedback over 32 sessions (1986, McGrady and Bernal)

- 14 year old female with recurrent syncope and basilar artery migraines
  - Responded to skin temperature biofeedback (1989, Smith and Glass)
Syncope case series

- 7 patients with neurocardiogenic syncope
- Diaphragmatic breathing, autogenic training, progressive muscle relaxation, and biofeedback
- 5-12 sessions
- 6 of 7 with no or rare syncope at end of treatment

Grubb BP et al., Applied Psychophysiology and Biofeedback; vol 22: no. 1, 1997
44 patients with neurocardiogenic syncope

No response to maximal supportive therapy

Taught self-directed yoga via DVD

Outcomes:

— Significant reduction in syncopal episodes
— Decrease in positive HUTT response
— Decrease in syncope functional status questionnaire score
How does it help?

- Shift away from the driven mind to the being mind
  - Driven: reducing discrepancy, reanalyze, seek control and resolution
  - Being: No particular goal, allowing, detached, live in the present, no pressure to change

Mind Full, or Mindful?
How else does it help?

▪ Train attention and awareness to the present
▪ Attend to the way experience is processed instead of changing negative thinking
▪ Use continual self-observation and acceptance

Inner peace begins the moment you choose not to allow another person or event to control your emotions.

Pema Chödrön
Mindfulness: Major Impact Third Wave Psychotherapies

- Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (Kabat-Zinn)
- Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy (Zindel, Segal, Teasdale, Williams)
- Dialectical Behavior Therapy (Linehan)
- Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (Hays)
What do people report after therapy?

- Lasting decrease in physical and psychological symptoms
- Increased ability to relax
- Reduced pain or better coping with pain
- More energy
- More enthusiasm for life
- Better self-esteem

— Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care and Society, UMASS School of Medicine
Sounds hard - How do I do this?

- Techniques to focus in the present:
  - Breathing
  - Body scan
  - Progressive muscle relaxation
  - Meditation
A: Awareness

- Close your eyes
- Don’t change or control your breathing
- Notice
- Try for 2 mins – what do you notice?

- A calm breath leads to a calm mind
- Try to build up to 10 mins per day
- Practice is essential
NOTE TO SELF:
REMEMBER TO BREATHE

Take a breath, take a walk, hit the pause button, whatever you need to reset.
D: Diaphragmatic Breathing

- Shallow chest breathing is associated with stress
- Belly breathing is associated with calm
- Sit upright
- Place one hand on your belly and the other on your chest
- Close your eyes
- Focus on your belly
- Consciously move your belly more than your chest

- Practice for 10 mins a day!
There’s an app for that....

- **Stop, Breathe and Think**
  - Meditation exercises narrated by K.D. Lang
- **Calm**
  - Choose a timed package for relaxation
- **Mindfulness Training app**
  - iPhone only
  - Science of mindfulness + meditation exercises
- **Headspace**
  - 10 minute meditation exercises
- **Insight Timer**
  - Guided meditation timer
Thank you!

- Questions?

ANY QUESTIONS?