

Hope and Humanity: The Mindful Journey Through Psychosis

Nicola P. Wright, Ph.D. C.Psych.
**Schizophrenia Program, Royal Ottawa Mental Health
Centre**

Clinical Professor, University of Ottawa
Staff Supervisor, Beck Institute

Nicola.wright@rohcg.on.ca

Workshop Outline

- **Process & Content**
- **Experiential approach:**
 - **curiosity, willingness**

Workshop Outline

- **'Third-Wave' CBT approaches**
 - **Mindfulness-Based**
 - **Acceptance & Commitment**
 - **Compassion-Focused**

Workshop Outline (continued)

- **Group Approaches & Individual Approaches**
- **Trauma-informed**
- **Barriers & Opportunities**

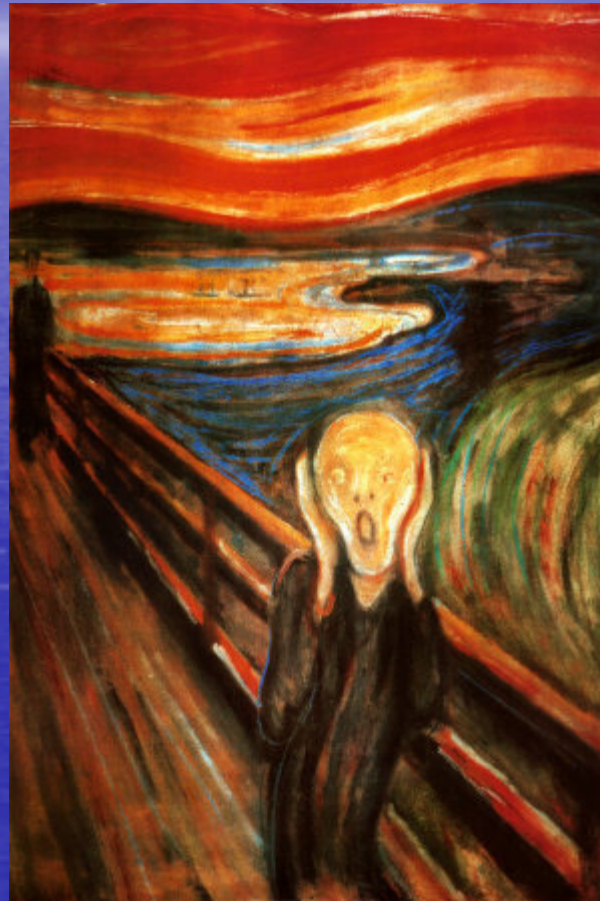
Who am I & Why am I Here

- **Meaning making, hope, empowerment**
- **Valued Goals & Committed Action**
 - **Compassion, connection, making a difference, going to the sacred painful places: co-traveller (mountain image)-our common humanity**
 - **Mindfulness-soaking it in**
 - **Therapist- Educator-Researcher-Writer- Advocate; The Chief**
 - **Mother, partner, friend, woman, psychologist, humanitarian/'animal lover, trauma survivor**

Our 'Clinical Work' World: Our Client's World

- **Compassion & Committed Action-courage**
- **Inequity-Injustice**
- **Social Rank**
- **Stigma-Marginalization (eg identity, poverty, housing-street-involved, multiple issues/challenges, survival-resilience-empowerment-recovery-hope)**
- **Safety-Threat**
- **Bureaucracy-corporation**
- **Client-centred- ratios 1500:1**

Our 'Societal' World: The Scream



**‘Our’ Shared Vision:
‘Our’ Shared Hope**

The background of the slide is a photograph of a vast, deep blue ocean stretching to the horizon. The sky above is a lighter blue with soft, wispy white clouds. The overall mood is serene and expansive.

Our Common Humanity

- **What we bring to our therapeutic relationships**
- **How we experience the human condition**
- **Our lived experience and our willingness/ability to enter another's**
- **Our thoughts & beliefs around psychosis/MH**
- **The why-how we make sense of the world/MH**
- **Us-them dichotomy-privilege**
- **Stigma, normalization, the language of therapy**
- **Participant input-why are we each here?**

Experiences & Thoughts from a Buddhist Monastery

- Our common humanity-struggling humans, bed bugs, & coming home
- Mindfulness-quieting the mind
 - Pain, joy, impermanence--the whole tapestry
- Attachment
- Judgement-striving
- Compassion/Loving Kindness
- No one answer no one truth-parallel-we each take what we take today

Third Wave Approaches

- **Commonalities**

- **Common humanity not based on 'healthy normality'-**
- **Continuum-'psychotic' experiences at 1 end of experiential continuum**
- **'Human'-authentic**
- **De-stigmatizing, de-pathologising**
- **Normalizing: not 'incurable', not un-understandable**
- **Validating**
- **Compassionate**
- **Safe base-understanding relationship**

Third Wave Approaches (cont'd)

- ***Focus on person/meaning not symptoms-
symptom reduction is not the goal**
- **Meaning making-existential issues**
- **Connecting-sharing of experience, belonging**
- ***Transform relationship with the difficult
thought, perception, experience**
- ***Understanding-harmless but
uncomfortable/distressing transient
psychological events**
- ***Mindfulness-based**
- ***Acceptance-based**
- ***Non-judgment**

CBTp: Acceptance & Commitment Therapy (Hayes)

- **ACT**

- 1) developing acceptance of unwanted private experiences out of personal control**
- 2) commitment & action towards living a valued life**

ACT

- **Theory & Research Support-**
 - **Bach & Hayes (2002) ACT sign reduced hallucinations & hospital days**
 - **Gaudiano & Herbert (2006) replicated above**
- **ACT individualized integration with 'traditional' CBTp**
- **Intuitively 'makes sense'**
- **Approach to life & wellness**
- **Caveat –fear**

CBTp: ACT (Harris)

- **Increase awareness -emotional control is the problem (use of metaphors)**
 - **Quicksand**
 - **Struggle switch ON—ex voices-vicious cycle-anger, guilt or anxiety about voices**
 - **Struggle switch OFF voices come & go, unpleasant but not wasting time & energy**
 - **Help to work towards the life you want to lead**

ACT : 6 core principles

Develop psychological flexibility through:

- **Cognitive diffusion**
- **Acceptance**
- **Contact with the present moment**
- **The observing self**
- **Values**
- **Committed action**

ACT : Undermining Cognitive Fusion

I used to think the brain was the most wonderful organ in my body. Then I realized who was telling me this.

(Emo Philips)

ACT : Acceptance

When suffering comes knocking on your door & you say there is no seat for him, he tells you not to worry because he has brought his own stool

(Chinua Achebe, 1967)

ACT : Acceptance

- **Developing willingness/acceptance for thoughts, feelings, experineces (eg voices), urges**
- **Writing on the beach**
- **Waves coming & going**
- **Teflon mind**
- **Leaves on a stream**
- **Clouds passing by**
- **Make room for 'it'**

**ACT : Contact with the
present moment**

**Our true home is in the
present moment**

(Thich Nhat Hanh, 1992)

ACT : Contact with the present moment

- Here & now experience-all senses-raisin
- Openness, curiosity & receptiveness
- Mindfulness (not avoiding)

ACT : The Observing Self

**You can see a lot just by
observing**

(Yogi Berra)

ACT : Values

When I dare to be powerful, to use
my strength in the service of my
vision, then it becomes less
important whether I am afraid

(Audre Lorde, 1997)

ACT : Values

- **Defining valued directions**
- **What is most meaningful to you**
- **The sort of person I Want to be**
- **What I want to stand for in life**
- **Checklist-genuine, kind, giving, good friend etc,..**
- **Epitaph**
- **Willingness to experience 'thoughts/voices' to go in the direction of values (don't want them)**
- **Ex-Demons on the boat**

ACT : Committed Action

**It takes a deep commitment
to change and an even deeper
commitment to grow**

(Ralph Ellison, 1914-1994)

ACT : Committed Action

- Value driven goal setting
- What is most meaningful to you
- Creating a rich, full & meaningful life

- What is our committed action ?

Mindfulness

- 1) Awareness –cultivation of awareness**

- 2) Attitudinal framework-non-striving, acceptance, kindness, curiosity & willingness to be present with unfolding of experience**

- 3) Pay attention-turn towards**
 - **On purpose**
 - **In the present moment**
 - **Non-judgement –infused with compassion**
 - **'Moment to moment present awareness without judgement'**
 - **Kabat Zinn = participatory observation**

Mindfulness (cont'd)

- 4) Embodied understanding of human vulnerability**
- 5) Universal vulnerabilities & challenges inherent part of being human**

Mindfulness

**All 'thoughts, experinces, voices' are
nothing more than waves in our ocean
of being (Monterio, 2003)**

Mindfulness (Chadwick, 2009; Kingdon, 2009)

Mindfulness: a novel relationship with experience

- Acceptance & welcoming of (all) experience
- Experience is experienced w/ complete awareness
- Do not use (*symptom/illness*) for self-definition (not me, not mine)
- Understand- fleeting object of awareness
- Let it go
- Do not judge 'it' or oneself

Mindfulness

- **Style of thinking & experiencing:**
 - maintains & perpetuates itself
 - Rumination/worry
- **Experiential Avoidance:**
 - attempt to distance from thoughts, emotions, body sensations etc,...

Mindfulness

- **How-mindfulness practice**
- **Infused in teaching: attitude of curiosity, compassion, non-striving**
- **Group: reflection, dialogue, group exercises & group processing**
- **De-centre: step back from our thought processes – meta-cognitive/acceptance**

Mindfulness

- It is about learning to accept and live with these experiences without feeling preoccupied, ruled, dominated or overwhelmed by them (Chadwick, 2006)
- Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction
- Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy
- Theoretical underpinning & additional tool

- 3 minute breathing space
- Mindfulness bells
- Body Scan

Mindfulness

- **Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy (Segal et al.)**
- **Learned associations of mood, ruminative thinking patterns, experiential avoidance & physical sensations**
- **Learned associations imprint of memory – cognitive, emotional & physical-reactivated**
- **Differential activation- less needed to activate**

Mindfulness (cont'd)

- De-centred awareness/relationship with thoughts, emotions & body sensations
- Learn to relate to the thinking process NOT from the content of thoughts themselves
- Aspects of experience only
- Mindfulness & relapse incompatible states
- Witness patterns & habits of mind
 - tendency for automatic pilot of rumination
 - in mindfulness the fuel to retain distressing thoughts w/drawn
- Our experience NOT our identity
- An aspect of our experience in this moment

Mindfulness

- **We may never be quite where we actually are, never quite with the fullness of our possibilities (Kabat-Zinn, 1994)**

Mindfulness

- Pro-occupation & preconceptions cloud the mind
- Automatic pilot-evolutionary advantage
But causes suffering
- Paradox –acceptance can lead to change
- Thought bus, train analogy-letting the thought buses go by
- Makes life more meaningful

Mindfulness

- **Awareness may not diminish the enormity of our pain in all circumstances. It does provide a greater basket for tenderly holding and intimately knowing our suffering & that is transforming
(Kabat-Zinn, 2005)**

Mindfulness

**This being human is a guest house
Every morning a new arrival
A joy, a depression, a meanness
Some momentary awareness comes
As an unexpected visitor.
Welcome & entertain them all
(Rumi, 1995)**

Mindfulness

- **MBCT**
- **Group-based 8 weeks 2-2.5 hours**
- **Start with practice (body scan, mindfulness breathing, sitting meditation)**
- **Group exercises discussion**
- **Homework/practice**
 - eat mindfully, 1 act mindfully
- **Pleasant events record**

Mindfulness

- MBCT
- 3 minute breathing space –regular
- 3 minute breathing space –coping
- Mindful walking
- 5 min. mindfulness of seeing or hearing
- Introduction of a difficulty in practice
- Opening the body door

Mindfulness-MBCT

- **Week 1-Automatic pilot**
- **Week 2-Dealing with barriers**
- **Week 3-Mindfulness of the breath & body in movement**
- **Week 4-Staying present**

Mindfulness-MBCT

- **Week 5-Acceptance & allowing/letting be**
 - thoughts are not facts-moods, thoughts and possible alternative explanation exercise
- **Beginning to develop a personal 'red-flag' signature & action plan**
- **Opening the thought door**

Mindfulness-MBCT

- **Week 6-thoughts are not facts-
discuss moods & thoughts and
possible alternative explanation
exercise**
- **Beginning to develop a personal
action plan**
- **Opening the thought door**

Mindfulness-MBCT

- **Week 7-How can I best take care of myself**
- **Exploration of link between activity and mood**
- **Nourishing daily activities list –mastery & pleasure**
- **Development of early warning system**
- **Plan**
- **Opening the door of skilful action**

Mindfulness-MBCT

- **Week 8-Using what has been learned to deal with future problems**
- **Summary of program**
- **Review**
- **Ongoing practice-staying well**
- **Boosters**

Mindfulness

Tailoring Mindfulness for Psychosis

- **Client history**
- **Relationship w/client**
- **Grounding skills-meta-cognitive & de-centring/distancing skills**
- **Troubleshoot**

Mindfulness

- **Psycho-education- noticing, diffusing, changing relationship**
- **Family members**
- **Noticing w/out judgement- addresses defeatist beliefs**
- **NO RIGHT WAY**

Mindfulness

Tailoring Mindfulness for Psychosis

- **Acceptance, curiosity not evaluating**
- **'This is my experience & my reality now'**
- **In this particular moment, for some reason, I am having these thoughts/voices**
- **This will pass-transient**
- **Increase in distressing experiences-may feel worse before feel better**

Mindfulness

- **More in touch with body, physiological experiences, thoughts etc...**
- **Shorter practices- seconds & minutes**
- **Chadwick et al., 2 x 1 minute practices**
- **Informal practice vs formal practice**
- **Experience every day experiences with greater awareness**

Mindfulness

Tailoring Mindfulness

- Pacing
- Less time/silence
- Heterogeneity
- Finding commonality
- Touch base after & at end of session
- Developmental approach to home practice
- Closed vs open eyes

Mindfulness

- Hand on chest/belly-grounding
- Session 4 MBSR-Mindfulness of sounds
- Voices-notice characteristics not content-tone, loudness, pitch
- Opposite –noticing not avoiding
- Process important NOT outcome
- Vitamin, diet, exercise analogy
- Shifting from doing mode to being mode

Compassion-focused Therapy (Gilbert, 2010)

- From latin To suffer with
- A sensitivity to the suffering of self & others w/ a deep commitment to try to relieve it (Dalai Lama)
 - sensitive attention-awareness + motivation
- If I had a god, I'd say we were holy & didn't know it, But I see only what we make of ourselves on earth, How long it takes for us to love what we are (Bronwen Wallace, 1985)
- Engaging with the painful-

Compassion-focused Therapy

Neff - definition of compassion

1) Mindful & open to one's own suffering

2) Being kind & non-self-condemning

3) Awareness of sharing experiences of suffering (not shame) - openness to common humanity

- **CBTp group-psychology & neurophysiology of caring**

CFT

- **Target –negative self-self relating**
- **Targets shame & self-criticism**
- **Internal hostile signal- enhances submissive & negative affective responses (Gilbert et al., 2001)**
- **Self-attacking a psychological maintaining & vulnerability factor -increases potential for relapse**
- **Voices operate like external social relationships (sense powerlessness & control)**
- **Promising therapeutic strategy for psychosis (Mayhew & Gilbert, 2008)**

CFT

- **Compassionate self-correction vs. shame-based self-attacking**
- **Responsibility vs self-critical blaming**
- **Evolutionary role of caring, psychology & neurophysiology of caring**
 - **Well-being + feelings, contentment safety-increased -endorphins & oxytocin**

CFT

- **Effective w/ voice hearing (Mayhew & Gilbert, 2008) & psychiatric patients (Laithwaite et al., 2009)**
- **CFT process focused, not disorder focused –shame & self-criticism –transdiagnostic processes**
- **Affects brain functioning in areas of emotional regulation (Begley, 2007 & Davidson et al, 2003)**
- **Affect regulation system 'off line'**

CFT

**Paranoid thoughts- threat attention & appraisal
(Garety & Freeman, 1999)**

**Paranoid feelings & hostile voices –hyper-vigilant
(Birchwood & Chadwick, 1997)**

- **External & internal threat**
- **Mayhew & Gilbert (2008)-ability to generate warmth & contentment & self-compassion**
- **PMR-guided imagery of a compassionate image**
- **emotional memories of time compassionate to self or someone else**

CFT

- **Self-criticism maintaining oneself in subordinate position (in a hierarchical threatening world) to appease others & keep safe (Gilbert et al., 2004)**

CFT

- **Develop self-soothing skills, empathy for distress, self-supportive thoughts**
- **Relationship w/ voices-not challenging or conflictual as stimulates amygdala-increases aversive arousal**
- **Examine threat focused thinking**
- **Self-compassionate attention, thinking & behaviour**

CFT-Fear of Compassion

- **Unfamiliar**
- **Beliefs about compassion-self-indulgent, a weakness,**
- **Don't deserve it**
- **Can't imagine or feel it**
- **Paranoia-care/compassion threatening due to mistrust**

CFT-Fear of Compassion

- **Compassion/caring reactivates attachment system-triggers negative emotions/memory as care was conditioned with threat/fear**
- **Grief-fear of being overwhelmed**
- **Compassion motto: 'Always think with your clients not for them'**

CFT-Fear of Compassion

**“I can wade through grief
Whole pools of it
I’m used to that
But the least push of joy
Breaks up my feet
And I tip –drunken”
(Emily Dickinson)**

CFT-Fear of Compassion Strategies

- **Explore block**
- **What do you think might happen?**
- **What might help you work on that?**
- **Clarify understanding & value**
- **Go slow & use reinforcement+++**
- **Desensitize to positive emotions, enhance tolerance of positive affect**
- **Prepare for longer time**
- **Explore different approaches**
- **Method acting**
- **Practice, repetition & perseverance**

CFT-Strategies

Compassionate Attention

- **Appreciation exercises**
 - **Attention training**
 - **Stimulating positive emotion systems**

**Sensory focused days-sight, smell, sound
etc,..**

CFT-Strategies

Compassionate Thinking

- **Reframe shameful & self-critical thoughts**
- **Guided memory**
 - **Recall feelings when someone was kind to you**
 - **Recall feelings of you being kind to others**

CFT-Strategies

Compassionate Behaviour

- **Self-compassionate letter writing**
- **Compassionate words**
- **Pleasurable/nurturing activities**

CFT-Strategies

Compassionate Imagery

- **Compassionate imagery-safe place**
- **Compassionate image-self, friend, perfect nurturer, community, animal**

Worry

When I look back on all these worries, I remember the story of the old man who said on his deathbed that he had had a lot of trouble in his life, most of which had never happened (Winston Churchill)

CBTp Group: Session Outline

Session	Topic
1	Introduction to CBT Group: Group Exercise
2	CBT and What It Can Do For You
3	Negative Symptoms And Getting Active
4	Getting Active: Thoughts That Get I n The Way Of Getting Active
5	Thinking Errors: Noticing My Thoughts & Checking Them Out
6	Review: Noticing And Checking Out Your Troubling Automatic Thoughts
7	Voice Hearing And Other Hallucinations
8	Voice Hearing And Other Hallucinations Continued

CBTp Group: Session Outline

Session	Topic
9	CBT Strategies For Troubling Thoughts And Hallucinations-Meta-thinking, De-Centring & Pie Chart.
10	CBT Strategies: Advantages & Disadvantages, Helpfulness & Meaning of Psychoses
11	CBT Strategies: Behavioural Experiments for Troubling Thoughts & Hallucinations
12	CBT Strategies for Paranoid Beliefs
13	CBT Strategies for Unusual Ideas or Beliefs
14	Shifting Core Beliefs: Feeling Good about Yourself
15	Relapse Prevention: Wellness Plan
16	Wellness Plan & CBT after the group: Consolidation of Gains
17	Booster Session at 6 months

Final Exercise

- **3 ideas you took from today's workshop**
 - 1
 - 2
 - 3

- **3 things you will apply**
 - 1
 - 2
 - 3

Exercise-Compassion-hesitation

- This is a pile of ... fluff. How will this make a difference. I want some real help.
- Easy for you to say –you don't have to deal with voices attacking you all the time.
- I can't do that it won't work (or help)
- Then I won't do anything. I'll never leave my apartment if I don't push myself & make myself do it.

Exercise-Compassion- Deserving/authenticity

- I don't have anything good about me.
- I feel like I don't deserve this kindness it feels wrong.
- I just can't feel anything. It just feels empty, blank.
- It's like when I stop feeling scared or worried it feels strange so I look for something else to worry about so I'll be ready.
- Why would I do this. Have you ever tried this?

Exercise-Compassion-Fear

- **It will make me feel worse.**
- **Whenever I try this compassion stuff I just get upset & start crying.**
- **I try these exercises & I just hear my dad saying I'm no good.**
- **What if I start to feel good & it all comes crashing down again. I would rather just not get my hopes up.**
- **I don't know how to feel good –it feels wrong/scary.**

Exercise-Compassion

It