

*Mindfulness and the arts therapies: theory and practice*, edited by Laury Rappaport, London and Philadelphia, Jessica Kingsley, 2013, 352 pp., £18.62 (paperback), ISBN 978-1849059091

Mindfulness and the arts therapies is a timely and high quality addition to the current arts therapies literature. Laury Rappaport's edited book offers a clear, well-structured resource for arts therapists interested in using mindfulness in their practice, from student therapists to experienced therapists. Presented in six parts, this comprehensive volume takes the reader from basic definitions and the background to mindfulness through a series of thoroughly practical examples of integrating mindfulness into arts therapies practice, to applications for students and reflective practitioners, finally focussing on the neuroscience of this approach. Pioneering authors bringing new thinking, creativity and clinical approaches are offered the opportunity, in this book, to share their work. Every arts therapy is represented, with contributors from USA, Australia and Hong Kong and beyond.

Mindfulness based stress reduction is based on 28 years of controlled and replicable outcome studies and is well regarded in the psychology field. Mindfulness is fashionable, however, and is arguably now an established American self-improvement regime. Not without detractors, Heffernan's acerbic critique of mindfulness in the New York Times Magazine argues:

The idea that people might overcome psychological and physiological shortcomings with self-induced comforting thoughts (*in mindfulness practice has*) already taken hold by other names: positive thinking, the recovery movement, self-help. In her scathing 1992 critique of this idea, 'I'm Dysfunctional, You're Dysfunctional,' Wendy Kaminer might have been describing the dissemination of mindfulness as a kind of shorthand for betterment when she talked about how to write a self-help book: 'Package platitudes about positive thinking, prayer or affirmation therapy as surefire, scientific techniques' (Heffernan, 2015).

Despite these criticisms, mindfulness is a popular, evidence based therapeutic technique, used by psychologists and therapists across the globe. A book exploring its role in the arts therapies field is timely and relevant.

This book offers a thorough introduction to mindfulness for the uninitiated, as well as offering a specific understanding of mindfulness in the creative arts therapies field. The natural mindfulness inherent in much creative activity is cited as the starting point for a specific relationship between the practice of mindfulness and arts therapies. This book explores the intersection between arts therapies and mindfulness practice, in particular exploring both the ways in which the arts therapies cultivate mindfulness and the means by which mindfulness fosters awareness and attunement, compassion and insight within arts therapies practice. As Jakusho Kwong-roshi states in the Forward, "Mindfulness creatively joined with the new therapies offers a stream of helping and compassionate service for something very old" (p. 13). This book provides an easy to understand and accessible technique for new therapists and offers a refreshing addition to the tool box of the more experienced professional.

This reviewer must now declare an interest in this debate, being a relatively recent convert to the practice of mindfulness. Daily mindfulness practice has been experienced, by this writer, to bring perspective, self-awareness and inner calm to her own music therapy practice. The accessibility of this basic approach of mindfulness is highlighted in this volume, along with a useful emphasis on the need for proper training to bring mindfulness to clients (Rappaport, "Introduction", p. 20).

As this book demonstrates, where mindfulness might be most useful in therapy practice is in developing the qualities of bearing witness, attention to the present moment, inner awareness, witnessing the experience that is happening in the "now" of the therapy space, acceptance and non-judgement. Mindfulness can help us "find a centre within us to bear witness to the storm" (Rappaport, p. 24). Mindfulness potentially offers opportunities for arts therapists to deepen self-awareness and compassion.

Divided into six parts, the book is very long and may be best used by dipping into it for references and resources for particular client groups or areas of interest to the reader. Overall, however, it is hard to criticise this well-organised, clearly articulated tome.

Parts I and II offer a clear, concise introduction to mindfulness, referring to the history of psychotherapy and the arts therapies. This is scene setting of high skill and subtlety. Shaun McNiff's contribution on "The Role of Witnessing and Immersion in the Moment of Arts Therapy Experience" (Chapter 2) is notable here, as is Rappaport's overview, "Mindfulness, Psychotherapy and the Arts Therapies" (Chapter 1).

Part III is exceedingly practical – one of the real strengths of this book is the concrete examples of clinical work, including verbal interventions in real life sessions as well as very clear, concise, well-structured contributions

throughout. For example, Chapter 4, by Caroline Peterson, entitled “Mindfulness-Based Art Therapy: Applications for Healing with Cancer” and Chapter 6, by Jennifer Frank Tantia, entitled “Mindfulness and Dance/Movement Therapy for Treating Trauma”, both offer rich examples of mindfulness based art therapy practice. Tantia’s clinical case study “thawing the frozen body” is evocative and eloquent in its description of the gradual opening up of a defensive client through mindfulness based movement. In Chapter 8, on “Music, Imagery and Mindfulness in Substance Dependency”, Carolyn Van Dort offers a great example of how to apply mindfulness and use it with a specific client group, in this case, people with substance dependency. This chapter also details how to run a group using mindfulness techniques, again offering real-world, down-to-earth examples and directives.

Part IV is more complex, exploring “types” of therapy. As an experienced music therapist with 20 years post qualification experience, this section was sometimes confusing. I had never heard of Hakomi (Merryl E. Rothaus, Chapter 15, “Hakomi and Art Therapy”), embodied awareness (Zoe Avstreich, Chapter 13, “Authentic Movement and Mindfulness: Embodied Awareness and the Healing Nature of the Expressive Arts”) or focusing-orientated art therapy (Rappaport, Chapter 14, “Focusing-Orientated Arts Therapy: Cultivating Mindfulness and Compassion and Accessing Inner Wisdom”). What is the difference, for example, between “arts therapy” and “person centred expressive arts therapy” (Fiona Chang, Chapter 16, “Mindfulness and Person-Centred Expressive Arts Therapy”)? Are these definitions helpful or do they confuse clients and stake holders outside of the arts therapies profession? Nonetheless, these chapters were informative and educational and raise debate about different approaches within the professional field.

Part IV also includes further examples of mindfulness and arts therapies work. Rappaport’s example of adapting mindfulness techniques to art therapy (Chapter 14) is fascinating and she explains the process well. Emily Tara Weiner’s work (Chapter 18, “Mindfulness and Focusing-Orientated Arts Therapy with Children and Adolescents”) is a great application of mindfulness and art therapy to a specific client group, in this case teens and children, who require quite a different approach to adult clients. The evidence base for mindfulness work with children is well presented here, with useful references included. The specific benefits of creative arts in addition to pure mindfulness are interesting here – the arts can be make the therapy process accessible to those who find talking therapies difficult, and the use of creative arts activities with children enables mindfulness techniques to be assimilated in a fun and engaging way.

Part V explores the role of mindfulness as professional development for arts therapists. This seems, to this writer, to be a very useful aspect of mindfulness, namely the practice might help us to develop awareness and self-care, to learn to be calm and centred. For student therapists, mindfulness might allow them to learn how to sit with themselves, develop informed intuition, relax fear of mistakes and tolerate ambiguity. (Michael A. Franklin, Chapter 19, “Mindful Considerations for Training Art Therapists: Inner Friendship – Outer Professionalism”). The practice might also allow us confidence to relax our conceptual agendas as events unfold in the session and be an unconditional presence. Many items in this section resonated for me with my own psycho dynamically informed practice as well as humanistic therapy training such as Rogers or Gestalt. Mindfulness may be a useful addition to our toolbox as therapists, assisting us to cultivate attention, empathy and unconditional positive regard for our clients. The daily silence of mindfulness practice may also allow us the all-important space we need as therapists to untangle experiences in therapy.

Part VI offers a reflection on the neuroscience of mindfulness and the arts therapies. This was complex science and difficult for this writer to grasp, but again adds to the validity of this approach. It includes contributions on the nervous system, internal composure and resilience, the role of mindfulness and arts therapy as neuroscience in action and a brief exploration of neuro behavioural research in therapeutic use of the arts.

All in all, this is a marvellous addition to the literature and a great resource. Clinical examples are detailed enough in this book to be replicable and it also offers practical advice and inspiration to the practicing therapist. There is a predominance of art therapy and dance/movement therapy in the book and further music and drama therapy chapters would have been welcome. However, music therapists might be interested to refer to Denise Grocke and Tony Wigram’s book on receptive music therapy which, although not a mindfulness book per se, offers a wealth of advice on receptive music therapy which might complement this approach (Grocke & Wigram, 2007). Gluck points out that whilst meditation/mindfulness is inward-directed and contemplative, the arts therapies tend to be more outward-directed and expressive. The combination of these two aspects in therapy may offer a powerful way to explore inner experiences as well as encourage emotional expressiveness, a combination of which might be a strong vehicle for insight, catharsis and change.

## Notes on Contributor

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*Creative Arts and Play Therapy for Attachment Problems*, edited by Cathy A. Malchiodi and David A. Crenshaw, New York, Guildford Press, 2015, 303 pp., £23.80 (paperback), ISBN 9781462523702

I was privileged to have the opportunity to read and review the book *Creative Arts and Play Therapy for Attachment Problems*. The book is comprised of three sections. Each one consists of a collection of essays from different practitioners, mostly from North America, addressing the theme of using creative arts or play therapy for clients with attachment difficulties. They are: “Introduction” to approaches to attachment issues, “Clinical Applications to Approaches to working with Attachment Issues” and “Clinical Applications to working with At-Risk Populations”. This book is certainly most suitable for professionals in and interested in the field.

All in all, there are seventeen chapters from different contributors who work in a variety of arts and play therapy contexts with clients who present with difficulties of attachment and trauma. As a drama and movement therapist working with clients in a setting with other arts therapists, play therapists and counsellors, where trauma and attachment difficulties are a common reason for referral, I greatly enjoyed and appreciated reading of the different nuances that each creative modality can offer within therapy. As illustrated in the different chapters, this is shared by music, play, drama, art and dance therapists.

The idea articulated in Chapter 4, on “Art Therapy, Attachment, and Parent-Child Dyads”, when Cathy Malchiodi reflects on Bruce Perry’s work that “experience becomes biology”, seems to me to encapsulate what the theorists in the book have in common (p. 64). It is from this point of view that play and creative arts therapies are argued as being so important; as they provide tactile, physiological as well as relational and emotive experiences that the client can hold on to and internalise. The general thrust of the theories related to current thinking around trauma, attachment and neuroscience from a therapeutic perspective were at times in danger of being repetitive, if it were not for some interesting references to the psychodynamic approaches of Jung and Winnicott and even some discussion of developmental arrest.

The book opens up the processes and dilemmas of play and creative arts therapies to the reader, providing a rich array of points to consider when working in this way with this particular client group. This includes the writing around the importance of a flexible approach that meets that client’s needs (sometimes including the parents in the work and working for multiple/ longer sessions in a week). It also includes some of the current challenges and debates therapists find themselves having regarding how to work with trauma in clients. For example, the limited effectiveness of only using cognitive approaches when a client may not have yet developed the faculties for cognitive reflection, and the importance of including the senses to soothe the lower parts of the brain and enable recovery. In contrast, the book also considers the question of the effectiveness of keeping material contained in metaphor and not bringing it to full conscious awareness.

The rigorous work with parents and families was a joy to read. It challenged me to reflect on my thoughts and feelings as both a parent and a therapist. The idea of parents who have not had good enough experiences of attachment and care themselves neglecting or mistreating their own children posed a moral dilemma for me. I know a number of people who had very poor attachment experiences themselves who are excellent parents. I was then challenged to contemplate how the decisions parents make about how they treat their children based on their own experiences are vastly more complex than simply not having had good enough parenting themselves. The chapters on working with parents and children together gave a promising message about how attachments can be trans-generationally repaired. It is clear that this type of work, however, requires a lot of time and resources and I wonder if current services on this side of the Atlantic are able to provide enough therapeutic input for families at this time. Some of the work reported in the vignettes took up to eighteen months, maybe more. I sincerely hope that this level of service is available for the client who needs it, as the trend of short-term intervention tends to be favoured by many organisations.

I was moved by the chapters on the creative use of metaphor and on working with cross-cultural adoption, as the writers articulated the rapport between the therapist and clients with such warmth and creativity. Several contributors offered creative tools that have been developed to work on the theme of attachment, such as nest drawing and making butterflies. Some writers offered more structured chapters, with assessment and evaluation tools such as the COS model in Chapter 3, “Attachment Theory as a Road Map for Play Therapists”, by Anne Stewart, William F. Whelan, and Christen Pendleton, which had a useful description of how attachment needs are communicated in a relationship using the “circle of security” and the idea of how “cues” and “miscues” can directly or indirectly indicate what the child’s needs are.

Since reading this book, I notice that I am more vigilant about the attachment quality of my relationship to my clients and theirs to me. I use the idea of “cues” and “miscues” to remind me when I am in the busy mindset of being a parent to listen and observe carefully my own children’s communication. I have found myself discussing techniques with colleagues from different disciplines, adapting ideas with a degree of confidence to my own work, and I have found myself recommending this book to supervisees. This book has inspired and refreshed me in my working practice and in my everyday life.

### **Notes on Contributor**

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