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Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy for Bipolar Disorder

by Thilo Deckersbach, PhD; Britta Hölzel, PhD; Lori Eisner, PhD; Sara W. Lazar, PhD; and Andrew A. Nierenberg, MD. *The Guilford Press*, New York, NY, 2014, 340 pages, \$45.00 (trade cloth).

Mindfulness has become a popular concept in the world of therapy. Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT) was introduced in the early 2000s as a treatment for patients with depression and a method for preventing relapse. Bipolar disorder represents a novel patient population for the use of this therapeutic approach. This practical book weaves together education about bipolar disorder itself with a step-by-step guide to using a mindfulness-based cognitive therapy approach. The team of authors is based primarily at Harvard Medical School.

These authors define *mindfulness* as “paying nonjudgmental attention to experiences in the present moment” (p 4). Mindfulness is historically derived from Buddhist practice and has been previously adopted in psychology for use in treatment of a number of conditions including depression, anxiety, and drug addiction. Mindfulness-based clinical applications emphasize the idea of being aware of things in the present instead of the past or the future. Another central tenet of the mindfulness approach is the promotion of the “being” mode of consciousness as opposed to the “doing” mode. Mindfulness techniques include breathing exercises, yoga poses, body scans, and meditations.

This book is written for therapists who work with patients who have bipolar disorder and also for therapists who have experience with mindfulness therapies but have not previously used this approach for patients with bipolar disorder. It describes a 12-session group therapy program combined with individual sessions. The

book is organized with 4 initial chapters that describe MBCT for bipolar disorder, followed by detailed descriptions of 12 MBCT group sessions for a set of hypothetical patients. The sessions are focused on a number of themes including depression, mania, anger, and anxiety.

These authors discuss the diagnosis of bipolar disorder thoroughly, including detailed discussions of prodromal symptoms and warning signs that suggest that an episode may be starting. They give suggestions for mindfulness-based methods to prevent or curb depressive, hypomanic, and manic symptoms. They also include methods to increase self-compassion, loving-kindness, and mindful problem-solving. They address possible obstacles to the use of this approach and ways to overcome them. The book includes 29 reproducible handouts and refers readers to a website that provides audio recordings of mindfulness exercises.

This very useful book is a valuable resource for therapists and trainees who work with patients who have bipolar disorder. It contains everything needed to implement this therapeutic approach, and it is written in a style that is easily understood. This therapeutic intervention is a refreshing addition to the medications that are the usual primary approach for treating bipolar disorder. It is highly recommended.

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