

Mindfulness for dummies?

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Meditation was initially introduced by Kabat Zinn as mindfulness in a program of stress reduction. Since then, mindfulness has steadily become very popular, and has been also incorporated into the cognitive approach of Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy. During this process, a main role for meditation has been progressively lost, and mindfulness has become a series of short periods of meditation which are one among the other home assignments received by the patient. Numerous studies have been made to evaluate the clinical and cost effectiveness of these approaches, and their results appear encouraging, particularly for long lasting effects on depressed patients. However, in spite of these efforts, the available studies do not provide unquestionable evidence of effectiveness and superiority to other psychotherapies, in particular psycho-dynamically oriented humanistic and interpersonal approaches. In the application of mindfulness to cognitivism, the moral principles of Buddhism have been neglected, and the idea to apply meditation in psychotherapy with the aim to focus on the “self” of the patients, contrasts with the aim of Buddhist meditation which is the realization of the illusory nature of the self. Efforts to avoid the numerous limitation of the recent reductionist and mechanistic developments of the blending of mindfulness with cognitive psychotherapy appear to be required. Meditation, when wisely chosen or integrated with other form of psycho-social intervention for the existential difficulties of the persons which are clinically and culturally more suitable, may result an additional useful offer for personal growth.