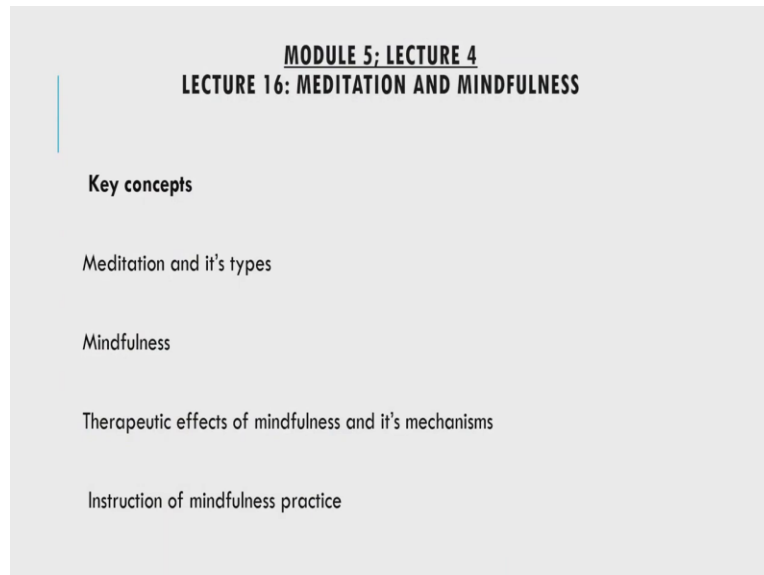


Psychology of Stress, Health, and Well-Being
Doctor Dilwar Hussain
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Lecture 16
Meditation and Mindfulness

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I welcome you all to the sixteenth lecture of the course title Psychology of Stress, Health, and Wellbeing. So this is overall sixteenth lecture and it is fourth lecture of module 5. So today we will talk about coping with meditation and mindfulness. Before we talk about today's lecture and its contents, let me have brief recap of the last lecture.

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So, in the last lecture, lecture fifteenth, which was the third lecture of module 5, we covered coping with social support and tried to understand that social support is a very significant factor in terms of dealing with stress and overall our both physical and mental health. Primarily because we, as individuals, have certain resources at our disposal to deal with difficult situations or a life crisis. However, these individual resources are frequently insufficient to deal with a circumstance. So social support kind of the resources of other people adds on to you and as a result, your resource increases and as a result you are able to deal with the situation in a better way.

In the last lesson, we also discussed several types of social support. We have primarily emphasized tangible support in terms of material help, which might include money, services, and items, among other things. Then there is informational support, which comes in the form of suggestions, advice, and so on. Then there is emotional social support, which includes showing sympathy, kindness, empathy, love and care, and so on. Finally, we have discussed invisible social support, which occurs when someone provides assistance to someone who is not consciously aware of the assistance.

So we've spoken about all of these different types of support, and we've also realized that all of them are required at different phases of life, and that some individuals are better at offering

specific types of support than others. So we've also spoken about numerous empirical results and research findings that illustrate how crucial social support is for stress management and overall wellness. Furthermore, social support has a positive impact on our health and well-being, primarily by positively impacting our physiological aspects such as reducing cardiovascular functions, reducing stress-related hormones, increasing immune functions, and so on, and it also increases health-related behaviors such as eating healthy diets, exercising etc.

So, in that context, we have addressed two hypotheses: the direct effect hypothesis, which states that social support is beneficial in all contexts, not just stressful ones, and the buffer effect hypothesis, which states that social support is most significant during high-stress situations. So, depending on the conditions, the findings supported both hypotheses.

Then we explored social support and network analysis utilizing the convoy model of social network analysis, where we defined a convoy as a collection of people who accompany us on our life's journey. They are called as social convoys and the people in the social convoy or the network, they differ in terms of closeness, quality of relationship, and functions. We also tried to understand that by using concentric circles, we can find out people who are in the inner circle, closest to us, then middle circles, who are a little further away from the inner circle and outer circle, people who are still important but not as close, and we can do this exercise to understand and find out the deficiencies and the quality of our social support network.

Finally, we explored how we may increase social support. We sought to comprehend primarily the two conceptions, two ways that we have observed. One technique of building social support is recognizing and resolving deficiencies in the existing social network, as well as developing new relationships, including ties with pets. So, in the previous lesson, we explored some of the strategies.

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MODULE 5; LECTURE 4
LECTURE 16: MEDITATION AND MINDFULNESS

Key concepts

Meditation and its types

Mindfulness

Therapeutic effects of mindfulness and its mechanisms

Instruction of mindfulness practice

So, today, we'll speak about how to cope with meditation and mindfulness. So, in that framework, we'll go over some fundamental concepts like meditation and its different kinds, as well as the concept of mindfulness. Then we'll talk about the therapeutic effects of mindfulness and its mechanisms, as well as how it influences or has a good impact on our many areas of functioning. Then, in a very brief exercise, we will offer you instructions on how to practice mindfulness. So let us get started.

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Meditation and Mindfulness

Meditation practices are common to almost all religious and spiritual traditions. It has been used for healing, insights, and enlightenment.

It is during the 1960s that scientific studies started focusing on the clinical effects of meditation on health after the reports of extraordinary feats of bodily control and altered states of consciousness by eastern yogis and meditation practitioners reached the west.

With the scientific advancement and refinement in instrumentation, scientific study of effects of meditative practices became possible.

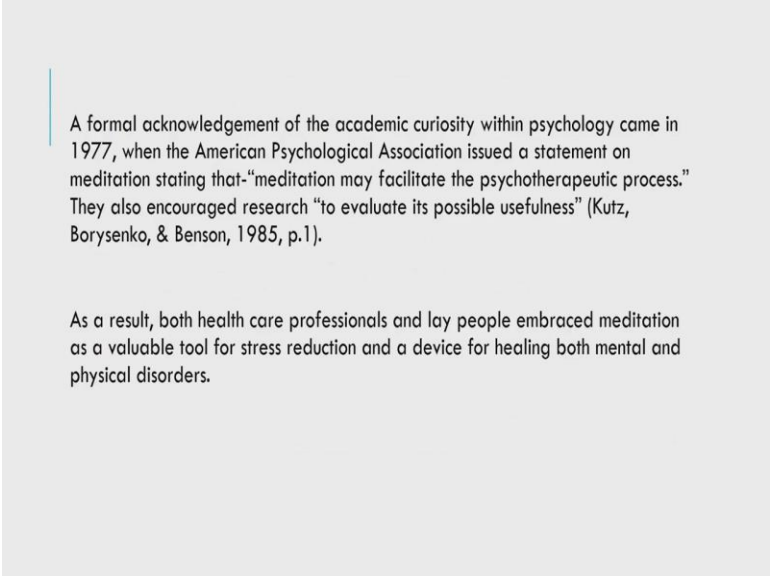
So, nowadays, meditation and mindfulness are highly popular exercises and practices, and these

types of activities are found in practically every religious and spiritual tradition. Previously, it was more centered on or associated with religious and spiritual traditions. All religious and spiritual traditions have their own methods of performing meditations and mindfulness exercises, and people used to practice these exercises for a variety of goals, including physical and mental healing. People utilize meditation to get insights into their inner mechanisms, such as how their mind works, how their emotions work, and so on. They also utilized meditation to get enlightenment in terms of liberation and illuminations in different aspects of life.

Nowadays, it is much more popular, and it has escaped from the religious circle specifically, and people use it more in secular contexts as a kind of coping method and to better their health, both physical and mental health. Thus, scientific research began in the 1960s. Prior to it, there was certainly not much scientific research in such areas, but it was largely done by individuals. However, from the 1960s, scientific research began to focus on the clinical implications of meditation, namely how it impacts diseases, both physical and mental ailments, and how it promotes healing. Scientific studies are also fueled following accounts of incredible feats of body control and altered states of consciousness by Eastern yogis and meditation practitioners, especially when they reached the West. So many Eastern yogis who practiced meditation and advanced forms of meditation traveled to Western countries and demonstrated their extraordinary abilities in terms of control over the body and mind, as well as various altered states of consciousness that they could bring on their own using meditation techniques. So, gradually, scientific circles became interested in learning more about meditation exercises and practices and how they work, and especially with the advancement and refinement of instrumentation for measuring physiological effects, scientific study and the effects of meditating practice became much more possible.

Furthermore, advancement in instrumentation such as brain imaging techniques, measuring brain waves, many physiological changes can be detected which also led to the growth of scientific studies on the impacts of meditation and mindfulness on mind and body.

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A formal acknowledgement of the academic curiosity within psychology came in 1977, when the American Psychological Association issued a statement on meditation stating that-“meditation may facilitate the psychotherapeutic process.” They also encouraged research “to evaluate its possible usefulness” (Kutz, Borysenko, & Benson, 1985, p.1).

As a result, both health care professionals and lay people embraced meditation as a valuable tool for stress reduction and a device for healing both mental and physical disorders.

The American Psychological Association released a statement concerning meditation in 1977, indicating that meditation may aid the psychotherapy process. This was the first formal acknowledgement of the scholarly curiosity within psychology. They also prompted researchers to reconsider its potential utility. So the American Psychological Association, the greatest body of psychology, also recognized the probable good influence of meditation and encouraged what its therapeutic influence is and to explore and do further research in that regard. So, obviously, with that call, a lot of healthcare experts and researchers entered into study into these areas to attempt to figure out what the probable consequences are in terms of healing effects, therapeutic effects. As a result, we will see some of the findings.

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What is Meditation?

The word "meditation" is derived from the Latin word "meditari", which means "to engage in contemplation or reflection." The word meditation comes from the same Greek and Latin root as the word medicine.

Manocha (2000) described meditation as a discrete and well-defined experience of a state of "thoughtless awareness" or mental silence, in which the activity of the mind is minimized without reducing the level of alertness.

Walsh and Shapiro (2006) defined meditation from cognitive and psychological perspective, as a family of self-regulation practices that aim to bring mental processes under voluntary control through focusing attention and awareness.

So, let us look at what meditation is in terms of formal definitions, because people might use this term to signify a variety of things. Everyone has their own definition. So, let us have a look at what meditation is all about. As a result, the term meditation is derived from the Latin word *meditari*, which means to engage in contemplation or reflection. So the fundamental term is *meditari*, which is a Latin term that means to contemplate or reflect on something. So, when you are simply reflecting on something or thinking about something, you are said to be in a meditative state. So that's what the root word is.

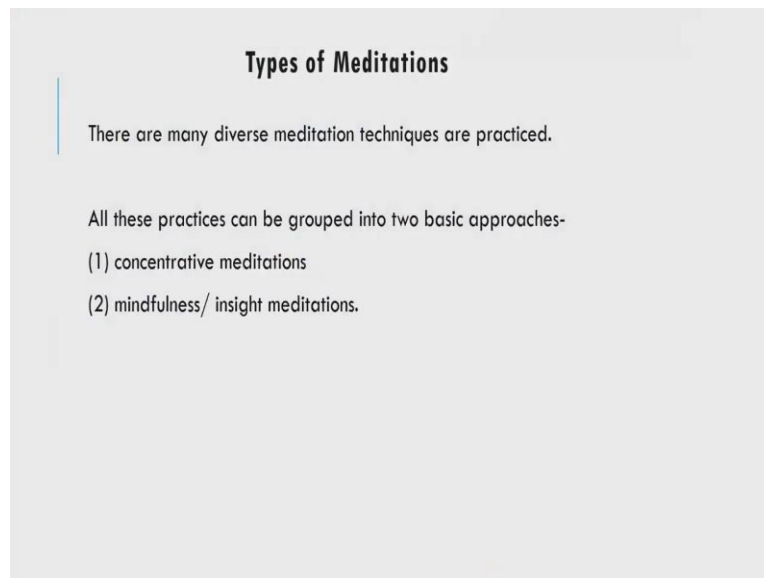
Meditation derives from the same Greek and Latin roots as medicine. Medicine, like meditation, arose from the same root. As a result, you might notice a link. Meditation is also employed as a medicinal property in terms of healing effects; both have a nearly same root.

In one of his study articles published in 2000, Manocha defined meditation as "a discrete and well-defined experience of a state of thoughtless awareness or mental silence, in which the activity of the mind is minimized without reducing the level of alertness." As a result, this is one of the definitions that embodies the essence of meditation.

There are various techniques available, but the basic idea of all techniques is to achieve a state where you remain fully alert, but your mental functioning in terms of intrusive and automatic thoughts, as well as too many worried thoughts and ruminations that happen continuously in our mind, is reduced. The occurrence of such thoughts decreases. You become fully alert, but the frequency of these disturbing thoughts decreases, and some people can entirely cease it in the advanced stages.

As a result, it is a thoughtless awareness. As a result, you become fully aware, but your mental processes are minimized. As a result, you are lot more at ease. It is the constant chattering of thoughts in your head that bothers you all the time, primarily because these are needless, random, and automatic thoughts. So, if you can manage them and minimize their ideas deliberately, you will obtain a peaceful state. So this is what meditation accomplishes. As a result, you experience mental silence or peace. Walsh and Shapiro defined meditation from a cognitive and psychological perspective in 2006. According to them, it is a family of self-regulation practices that try to bring mental processes under voluntary control by focusing attention and awareness. So they described meditation in slightly different ways, but the essence is the same. So, in essence, by using or practicing your attention and becoming more aware, you bring all brain functioning and processes under your voluntary control. As a result, they no longer automatically disturb. So you have the tools and skills to regulate them, which is a tremendously freeing feeling because most of the disruptions are caused by out-of-control, involuntary mental processes. So, by gently, gradually meditating, we can bring those processes under more voluntary control by employing specific tactics.

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So, let us look at the many styles of meditation. There are numerous meditation techniques that can be used, and there are possibly hundreds of them available today. People everywhere use various methods and ways to practice meditation. So many strategies exist, but all of them can be broadly classified into two broad approaches or two basic types.

The first is referred to as concentrative meditation or concentration meditation, while the second is referred to as mindfulness or insight meditations. So, depending on the techniques utilized, the purpose, or the method, all techniques can be classified as either concentrative meditation or mindfulness meditation. So let us see what are these categories.

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The first is concentrative meditation, which aims to still the mind and achieve greater awareness by focusing on a single sound, image, or sensation. So, in concentrative techniques, the concept is that you focus your mind on one item in order to exclude all other thoughts that are running through your head by focusing on that one item. It could be a single sound. Some people employ mantras, traditional sounds and chants from religious or spiritual traditions, whatever they may be. So it might be a sound, an image of something, an image of a deity or whatever, or sensations in the body. So the concept is that if you can focus your mind on one thing or train your attention to focus on one thing for a period of time, your mind will gradually come under voluntary control because you will learn to exclude everything else and consciously direct your mind on one item. So this is how you teach your mind to focus on one thing by focusing on a certain object of meditation. Transcendental meditation, which was established by Maharshi Mahesh Yogi and is widely popular in Western countries, is one example. As a result, they begin with concentrative meditation and other aspects of mindfulness are integrated in advanced stages.

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Mindfulness “involves opening up or becoming more alert to the continuous passing stream of thoughts, images, emotions and sensations without identifying oneself with them. Such practice helps in developing non-reactive state of mind, which is the foundation for calm and peaceful state of consciousness. Here instead of narrowing the focus (concentration) practitioner becomes alert to the entire field of consciousness” (Hussain & Bhushan, 2010, Page. 441).

Example, Vipassana and Zen meditations belong to this category.

The next category or collection of meditation practices is known as mindfulness, and it essentially entails opening up or becoming more sensitive to the constant passing stream of thoughts, images, emotions, and sensations without identifying with them. So the underlying concept of mindfulness is diametrically opposed to that of concentrative meditation. So, in concentrative meditation, you concentrate your entire attention on one object. So you restrict your attention, excluding everything else and concentrating solely on one thing. In mindfulness, you simply go in the opposite direction of narrowing down. You simply open yourself up and become totally alert, witnessing and observing whatever appears in your consciousness, whatever it is. Whatever thoughts arise, sensations arise, emotions arise, and so on, arising, fading, so many things occur in our mind and body structure. As a result, you simply become totally aware and open up. You do not react to them; instead, you simply observe the passing, arising, and disappearance of diverse consciousness contents. As a result, you do not identify with whatever appears. As a result, whenever a thought arises, you do not associate with it. You simply notice it, a thought arises and goes. You don't say whether it's good or bad, and you don't react to it; you simply observe it. Then, gradually, if you can maintain that neutral state, that witnessing position, nothing can disturb you because you are witnessing and not identified with them.

When you are identified with a thought, such as a sad thought, you get sad simply because you are identified with that thought process. So you become depressed because a depressing thought entered your mind and you identified with it. A depressing thought arrives and you get depressed

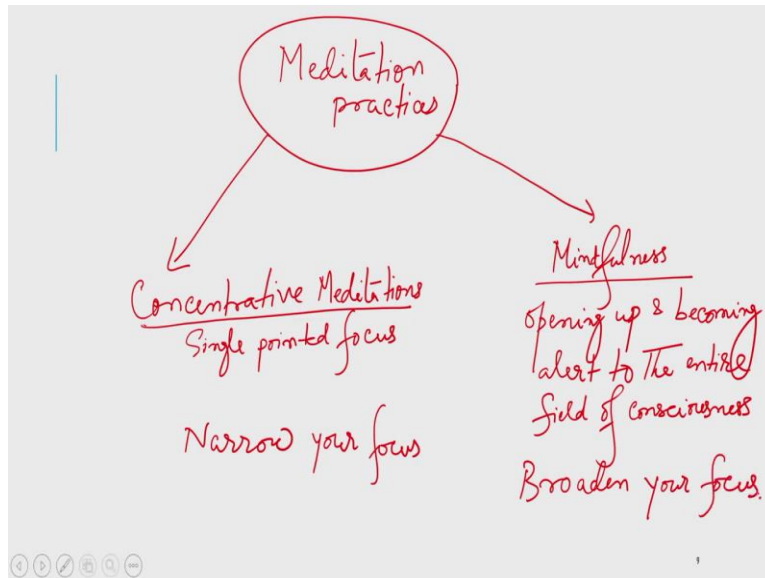
simply because we are identified with whatever happens in our minds, but if you can stay neutral and just observe, such a sad and gloomy thought arrives and then disappears. You don't cling to it as it comes and goes. As a result, it will have little effect on you. If you can maintain that neutral state, the frequencies will gradually diminish. So mindfulness is concerned with that. You become more open, your consciousness broadens, and you become more aware of the constant stream of thoughts, images, emotions, and sensations that arise. You don't identify with anything; you simply observe them like if you were sitting by a road, watching folks come and go. You don't seem to be interested in anyone. That's how it is.

As a result, such exercise aids in the development of a nonreactive state of mind. So, in general, we are constantly reacting to the contents; something happens, and whatever notion comes to mind, you will react to it and get disturbed. Thus, mindfulness assists you in achieving a nonreactive state of mind, which serves as the foundation for a calm and peaceful state of consciousness. You will be always disturbed if you constantly react to everything without genuinely looking into the problem deeply.

So achieving a tranquil state of consciousness requires gradually developing this nonreactive state of mind. That doesn't mean you don't react to suitable things; whatever is essential, you react and do it; but you don't react to a lot of things that aren't essential, such as random and intrusive, automatic, unconscious things. You understand how to keep your distance.

Instead of narrowing your concentration as in concentrative meditation, you become more aware of your full field of consciousness. You simply open yourself and observe what is going on without fighting or opposing in any way. Vipassana meditation and Zen meditations are examples of this genre. They came from the Buddhist traditions. Many of these meditations are also quite popular nowadays. They are also known as insight meditations since using mindfulness allows you to get a great deal of insight into the systems of your mind and body. So lot of techniques could be combination of both concentrative meditation as well as mindfulness. So you start with concentration, then you go into mindfulness. So lot of techniques can be a combination of these two also.

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So let me simply show you these two examples. As a result, there are two types of meditation techniques. One is a concentrative meditation. Essentially, you do it by having a single point of attention. Then there's mindfulness. Mindfulness entails broadening one's awareness and becoming aware of one's complete field of consciousness. You narrow your focus in concentrative meditation, whereas you broaden your focus in mindfulness. So these are some of the essential differences between these two approaches, yet the principle of focus or the goal of both approaches is the same, and many techniques begin with concentration and conclude with mindfulness.

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What is Mindfulness?

Jon Kabat-Zinn is one of the first academicians to introduce and popularize mindfulness in the academic and research circle. He is also the founder of mindfulness based stress reduction (MBSR)

He defined mindfulness as "Paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally" (Kabat-Zinn, 1994, p. 4).

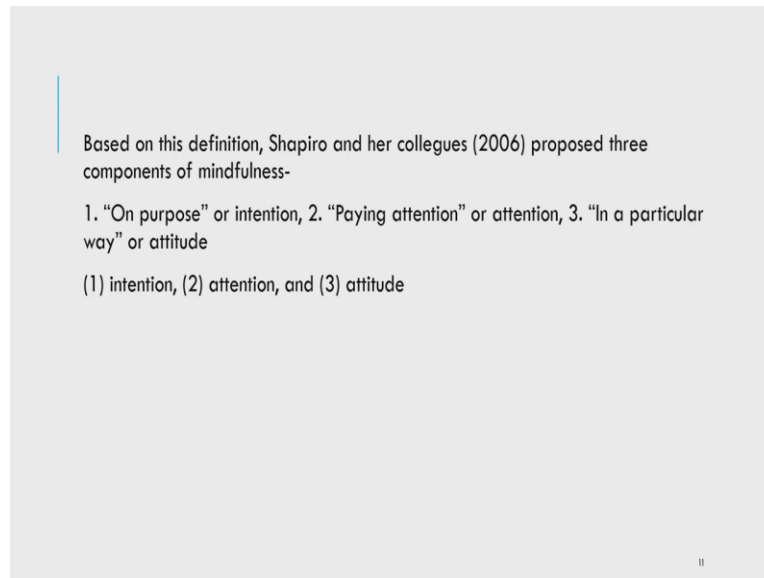
So, mindfulness has gained a lot of research attention in the last few decades

So, let us look into mindfulness in greater depth so that we may understand why it has attracted so much scientific attention. As a result, mindfulness was primarily a Buddhist technique. Buddhist monks and the Buddhist lineage of the religion where monks have been consistently practicing mindfulness meditation employed mindfulness as a tool. So as a technique, it was already available from the historical perspective. So it was not a new thing that came up, but obviously, it is a new thing in terms of academic research.

So, in the academic community, there is a man named Jon Kabat-Zinn. He was one of the first academics to develop and disseminate this mindfulness-based meditation practice in academic and research circles. He began conducting extensive research into the effects of mindfulness on various aspects, particularly in the academic and research circles. He is also the inventor of the mindfulness-based stress reduction program, which is widely used in a variety of settings, including academic institutions and hospitals, to assist people in dealing with stress and other mental health issues. We have previously attempted to comprehend what mindfulness is in general terms. It is about opening up and observing the contents of consciousness of our thoughts and emotions in very detached and neutral ways, while Kabat-Zinn described mindfulness with a little more nuance, saying that mindfulness involves paying attention in a specific way. Obviously, you pay attention. Mindfulness is built on the foundation of paying attention on purpose in the present moment and without judgment. So, how can you pay attention on purpose

and nonjudgmentally in the present moment? So we'll try to figure out what these components he's mentioned.

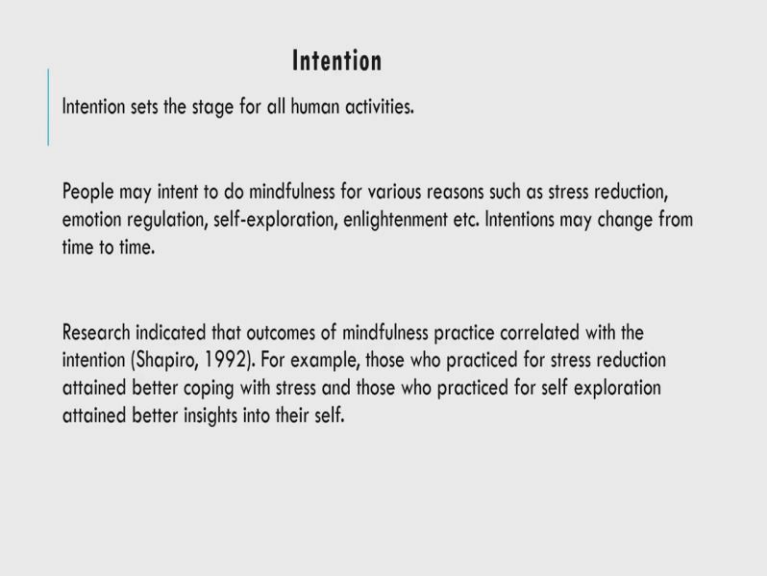
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So based on this definition, Shapiro and her colleagues in 2006 proposed three components of mindfulness. Let us see what the three components she is talking about are. So one thing from the definition was *on purpose*, which basically means intention. What is your intention while doing any practice such as mindfulness? The second component is *paying attention* or attention. So this is very important, attention. The third is in a *particular way*. So what is the attitude while doing? What is your attitude? How you pay attention is also important while doing mindfulness.

So there are three important components in mindfulness practice. One is called intention; second is attention, and third is attitude. So these three important components are kind of inherent in the practice of mindfulness. So let us see what are these three little bit in more detail.

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Intention

Intention sets the stage for all human activities.

People may intent to do mindfulness for various reasons such as stress reduction, emotion regulation, self-exploration, enlightenment etc. Intentions may change from time to time.

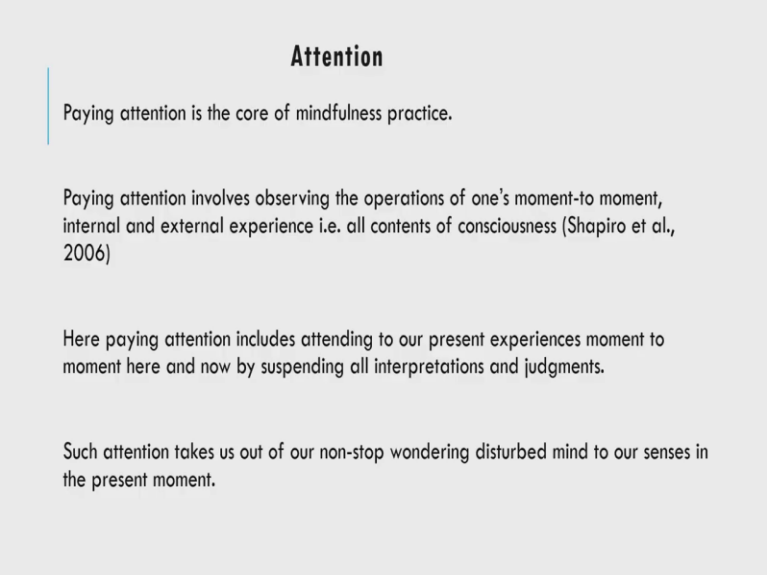
Research indicated that outcomes of mindfulness practice correlated with the intention (Shapiro, 1992). For example, those who practiced for stress reduction attained better coping with stress and those who practiced for self exploration attained better insights into their self.

We need the intention to do anything. For each activity, we must first decide, okay, I need to do this. You can't do anything if you don't have an intention. Similarly, in order to begin any mindfulness practice, you must first have a clear intention of what you want to accomplish. So, what is your goal? Why do you want to engage in mindfulness practice? As a result, people's objectives may differ. People may aim to practice mindfulness for a variety of reasons, including stress reduction. So someone may practice mindfulness for stress reduction, emotion control, self-exploration, spiritual enlightenment, or any of a variety of other reasons and goals. So, whatever your goal is, your outcome will follow. As a result, the intention may shift from time to time. As a result, people may begin with one intention and later change their minds. The intention is, of course, a constantly shifting concept.

For everything, our intention may change from time to time. So research indicated that outcomes of mindfulness practice correlated with the intention. So whatever intention you have, accordingly the outcomes were achieved. For example, those who practice for stress reduction attained better coping with stress and those who practice for self-exploration attained better

insights into themselves. So your invention also plays a very important role. Why you are doing it that will set the stage.

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Attention

Paying attention is the core of mindfulness practice.

Paying attention involves observing the operations of one's moment-to moment, internal and external experience i.e. all contents of consciousness (Shapiro et al., 2006)

Here paying attention includes attending to our present experiences moment to moment here and now by suspending all interpretations and judgments.

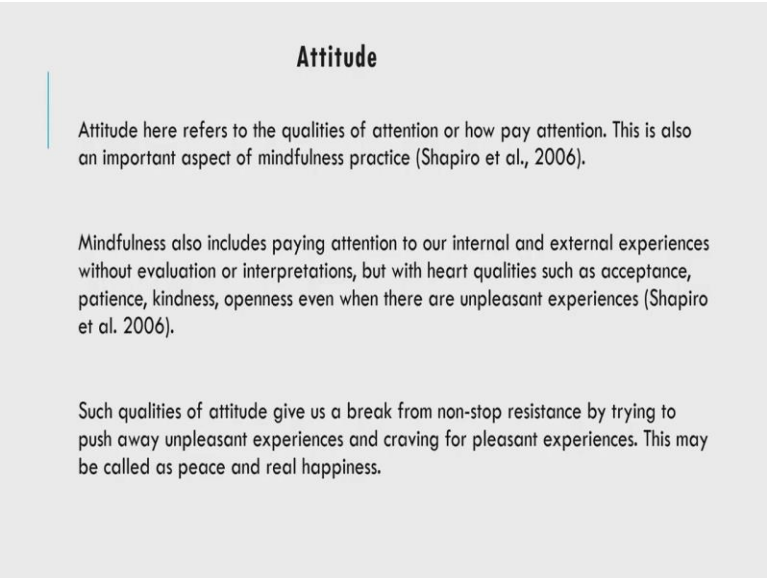
Such attention takes us out of our non-stop wondering disturbed mind to our senses in the present moment.

The second factor is attention. This is the most important point. As a result, paying attention to any contemplative practices as well as mindfulness is central. It all comes down to paying attention. Attention is so crucial and valuable that we cannot excel in any aspect of our lives without it. As a result, it is our focus that enables us to complete any activity. You cannot do any task if we were unable to pay attention. As a result, paying attention is critical, and through mindfulness and meditation, we basically train our attention to pay attention on something, which is essential for success in life. You must pay attention if you want to achieve anything. So attention is critical for meditation practice because meditation allows us to practice or train our attention. Paying attention is thus important to mindfulness practice. You will not be able to achieve this if you are unable to pay attention. As a result, we gradually increase our focus. Paying attention entails observing the operations of one's current internal and external experience. As a result, you must be alert and pay attention to anything appears in your mind, emotions, and body. So the ability to pay attention and stay in the present moment is critical for mindfulness practice. In this context, paying attention entails attending to our current experiences in the present moment. So, with mindfulness practice, you stay in the present moment and pay attention to whatever appears during the exercise. As a result, you don't strive to shift too much

between your past and present. You strive to stay in the present moment and pay attention to whatever appears from moment to moment. Actually, this is how you must work because the present is the most crucial time. You are only actively involved in the present moment, and most of what we think about in the past and future is essentially imaginary. Future is not yet happened, and the past has already gone. So in the present moment, you need to engage with things in the present moment. So the moment-to-moment, you kind of pay attention to all the contents.

Paying attention in this context entails attentive to our present experiences moment by moment while suspending all interpretations and judgments. So you don't interpret and judge too much during practice. When a thought appears to you, you do not judge if it is good or bad. You are lost in that time when you judge some thoughts are good and some thoughts are bad. You will begin to battle it. Then you are no longer a witness and a neutral observer. So that's the issue. As a result, maintaining a nonjudgmental attitude is critical. So if you just observe thoughts without judging it, it will not disturb you. It will appear and then go. Such attention takes us out of our non-stop wondering disturbed mind. So mostly, we are lost in our mind, too much of disturbing thoughts and emotions that come up, we get lost in them. So that is why mostly through mindfulness, we are changing that pattern.

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Attitude

Attitude here refers to the qualities of attention or how pay attention. This is also an important aspect of mindfulness practice (Shapiro et al., 2006).

Mindfulness also includes paying attention to our internal and external experiences without evaluation or interpretations, but with heart qualities such as acceptance, patience, kindness, openness even when there are unpleasant experiences (Shapiro et al. 2006).

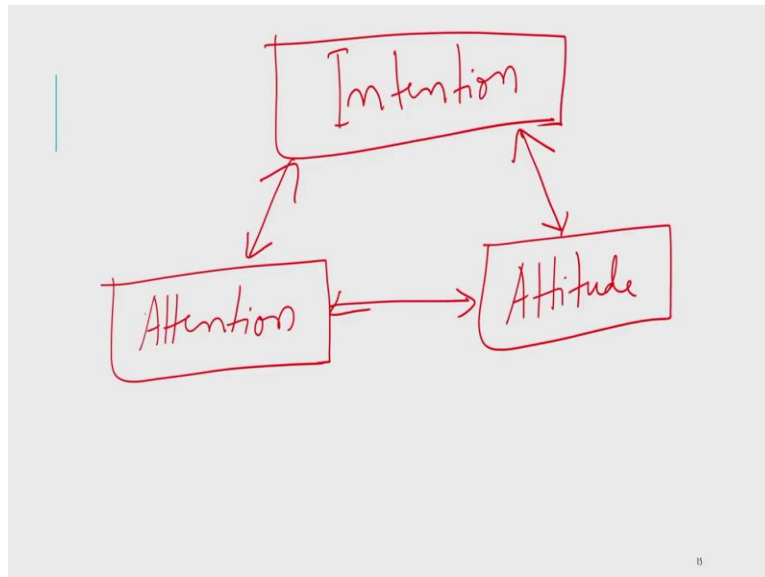
Such qualities of attitude give us a break from non-stop resistance by trying to push away unpleasant experiences and craving for pleasant experiences. This may be called as peace and real happiness.

The third factor is attitude. Attitude, in this context, refers to the qualities of attention or, more specifically, how you pay attention. What is the quality of your attention? So that's what attitude means in this context. As a result, this is a crucial part of mindfulness practice. Paying attention to our internal and external events without judgment or interpretation is also part of mindfulness. So you're paying attention, but you're not constantly evaluating and interpreting. You are nothing more than bare attention, offered in a neutral manner. As a result, you accept whatever comes to your mind and emotions. You do not engage in fighting with it. So there's acceptance and patience. You cannot achieve neutrality, kindness, or openness if you lack patience.

So these are the attitude qualities to which you pay attention. You become more open, patient, and accepting of whatever appears. You do not engage in fighting with it. So that's what nonjudgmental observation means. As a result, such attitudes provide a break from the never-ending resistance of attempting to push away bad experiences while yearning for pleasurable ones. Constantly, we are fighting with the contents of our minds and emotions.

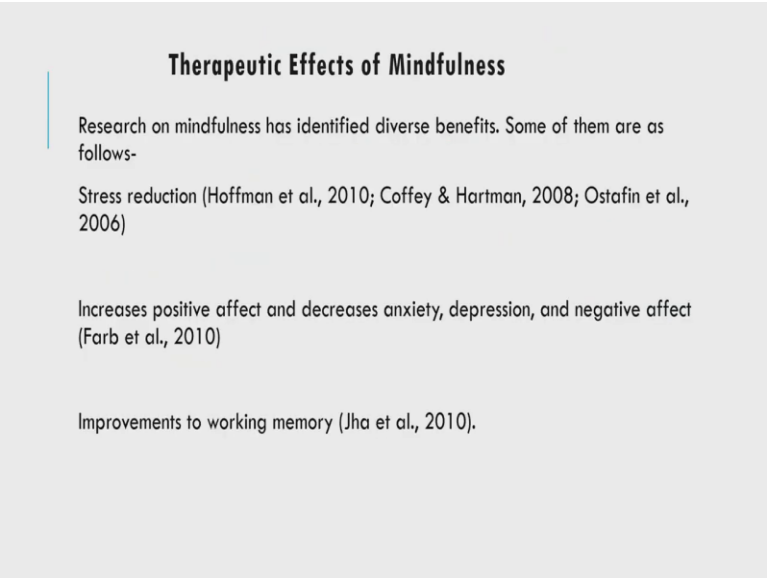
We are constantly resisting to thoughts and emotions by resisting and fighting unpleasant experiences and craving pleasant experiences. This actually increases these whole emotional and mental disturbances. So, this mode of mental processing changes with mindfulness. Furthermore, these three components constantly interact with each other.

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So if you see attention, attitude, then intention. So they all continuously interact with each other. And this is the model from Shapiro and his colleagues' 2006 model. So basically, these three components are very important part of mindfulness, and they continuously interact with each other.

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Therapeutic Effects of Mindfulness

Research on mindfulness has identified diverse benefits. Some of them are as follows-

- Stress reduction (Hoffman et al., 2010; Coffey & Hartman, 2008; Ostafin et al., 2006)
- Increases positive affect and decreases anxiety, depression, and negative affect (Farb et al., 2010)
- Improvements to working memory (Jha et al., 2010).

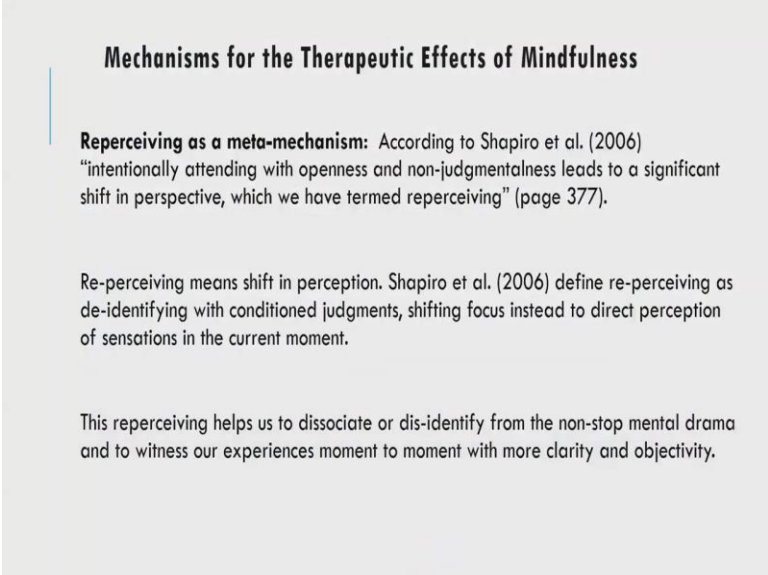
Let us now look at the therapeutic effects of mindfulness. What are the scientific findings indicating that it is beneficial? So there has been a lot of study done on mindfulness as an intervention for various healing benefits and therapeutic outcomes. So I'll just mention a few of them briefly. Because the literature is so vast, it is impossible to include all of the research findings. As a result, research on mindfulness has discovered a wide range of positive effects or advantages. Mindfulness helps in coping with stress. A number of studies have shown that it is an important approach of dealing with stress. So stress reduction is a large area where a lot of research has proved its benefits. Mindfulness also improves positive affect, or happy feelings, while decreasing negative affect, or unpleasant emotions such as anxiety, depression, and a variety of other bad emotions. As a result, it aids in the promotion of happy feelings. As a result, it will assist you in increasing your happiness and positive mood, among other things.

It also helps with working memory. As a result, memory functions significantly better. It also aids in increasing relationship satisfaction by reducing conflict in the relationship. When you become less reactive to mostly automatic and destructive emotions and thoughts, you don't simply lose yourself in those automatic and destructive thoughts. In general, conflicts should decrease in your life.

As a result, one of the most essential advantages is that your relationship satisfaction will

improve. Mindfulness has also been shown in studies to improve immunological function and physical health across a variety of metrics. Overall, it enhances well-being in terms of mental well-being, mental health, and a variety of other indices. So these are some of the example studies that suggest mindfulness can be beneficial in a variety of functional areas.

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Mechanisms for the Therapeutic Effects of Mindfulness

- **Re-perceiving as a meta-mechanism:** According to Shapiro et al. (2006) "intentionally attending with openness and non-judgmentalness leads to a significant shift in perspective, which we have termed re-perceiving" (page 377).
- Re-perceiving means shift in perception. Shapiro et al. (2006) define re-perceiving as de-identifying with conditioned judgments, shifting focus instead to direct perception of sensations in the current moment.
- This re-perceiving helps us to dissociate or dis-identify from the non-stop mental drama and to witness our experiences moment to moment with more clarity and objectivity.

So, let us look at the mechanisms that allow mindfulness to have such a positive impact. Why does it have such a beneficial influence? So Shapiro and his colleagues basically discussed how re-perceiving is the most crucial fundamental mechanism through which it achieves all of its favorable effects. So re-perceiving entails a shift in perception or a shift in viewpoint when looking at or engaging with our own systems. As a result, there is a shift.

According to Shapiro, actively attending with openness and non-judgment leads to a substantial shift in perspective, which is referred to as re-perceiving. Re-perceiving denotes a shift in perception or a shift in perspective of look pertaining to our thoughts and feelings. So, fundamentally, that is the most important mechanism by which it achieves all of its favorable effects. Re-perceiving, according to Shapiro et al, is characterized as deidentifying with conditioned judgment.

As a result, we are constantly reacting and judging with the contents of our minds and emotions,

reacting and becoming lost in them. So, through re-perceiving, you de-identify with it and become more neutral and witnessing.

So it is the fundamental mechanism. So when you're not identifying and getting lost in it, everything's frequency (thoughts, emotions etc.) decreases because they are not able to draw energy from you. Only by identifying with them do they become much more intense and bother us more since we identify with them. When you dis-identify, you become a witness, and this thing, all the unpleasant feelings and troublesome thoughts, worried thoughts, do not receive energy from us and gradually fade out.

As a result, this is the primary mechanism known as re-perceiving. As a result, this re-perceiving allows us to detach or dis-identify from the never-ending mental drama and see our experiences with greater clarity and objectivity from moment to moment. As a result, you become more objective and clear in your head.

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According to Shapiro et al. (2006), re-perceiving is a meta-mechanism that leads to other additional mechanisms that further contribute to the positive effects of mindfulness. They are-

- (1) self-regulation and self-management,
- (2) emotional, cognitive and behavioral flexibility,
- (3) values clarification and,
- (4) exposure

So, here re-perceiving is considered as the meta-mechanism as it contributes to other sub-mechanisms that lead to many positive outcomes. Primarily they said four other functions that re-perceiving does in terms of bringing out positive changes. One is *self-regulation and self-management*. So mindfulness increases our ability for self-regulation and self-management by re-perceiving as re-perceiving promotes self-regulation and self-management. It also helps in

emotional, cognitive, and behavioral flexibility. The third one is *value clarification*, and the fourth one is *exposure*. So let us see all these four mechanisms very briefly.

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Mindfulness promotes self-regulation and self-management. It aids or promotes our ability to regulate our emotions and conduct. Essentially, this reperceiving, witnessing, or dis-identification with the never-ending stream of thoughts and emotions. It assists us in connecting with our experience. So when you're lost in it, you can't see what's going on. So, when you put some distance between yourself and your thoughts and emotions, you can clearly perceive and connect with them. We now have more access to experiential knowledge. We can see what is going on in our thoughts and emotions more clearly, therefore we don't avoid it as much. When you become caught up in it because it's unpleasant, you want to escape it and don't notice what's going on. As a result, it decreases avoidance and enhances openness to experiential information. It gives us more control over what we do with it, which lowers automatic, intrusive, habitual, and maladaptive reaction patterns. As a result, we have far more control over our minds and emotions.

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Values Clarification

Mindfulness helps people to identify the true values and meaning of their life.

Ordinarily we are identified and conditioned by the outside societal forces which dictates our values and choices of life. Mindfulness helps us to break from the influences of these forces and objectively look at our life, reflect and rediscover our true values and meaning of life.

The second mechanism is value clarification. So mindfulness assists people in identifying their genuine values and the significance of their lives, primarily because we are too often identified with our circumstances or by external societal influences. We are constantly reacting to outside social factors, and those factors mostly influence our conduct. As a result, mindfulness can assist us in breaking free from these influences. So you can see what you really desire, what your inner potential is, and other things because you can view your inner mechanisms objectively lot more clearly. As a result, it assists you in breaking free from those external influences and taking an objective look at your life, reflecting on and rediscovering your genuine values and meaning in life. As a result, it also promotes, gradually assisting you to discover more clearly. It will provide you with deeper insights into your core values and the meaning of your existence. As a result, you can also boost happiness and positive functions.

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Cognitive, Emotional and Behavioral Flexibility

Mindfulness enhances flexibility at all levels, i.e., mental, emotional and behavioral levels.

Reperceiving increases the clarity and objectivity to our moment to moment experiences. Consequently, our degree of freedom and choice to respond in a situation increases either mentally, emotionally or behaviorally. We become less and less victims of our environment, thoughts and emotions.

The third mechanism is cognitive, emotional, and behavioral flexibility. This is also really significant. Flexibility in our cognitive processes is critical in our behavior because if you become rigid you will be unable to expand and adapt to a circumstance. As a result, if you are not flexible, you will be unable to adapt to diverse conditions. We adapt to a single type. So flexibility is critical, and mindfulness helps to provide that flexibility.

It improves mental, emotional, and behavioral flexibility on all levels. As a result, reperceiving improves the clarity and objectivity of our present-moment experiences. As a result, our degree of freedom and choice in responding increases. So we didn't get lost in it. So you can observe and decide, and you may make a choice. As a result, there is more freedom to choose what to do in a scenario. If you are continually reacting and getting lost, you have no choice; whatever your mind tells you, whatever your emotions tell you, you go with that flow; but with mindfulness, you regain your choice, your independence in terms of how to behave and respond to a circumstance. As a result, we become less and less victims of our environment's thoughts and emotions, and we gradually recover confidence in or insights into regulating own thoughts and emotions. That is the meaning of flexibility.

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Exposure

Exposure is a technique used in various therapies such as phobias. The basic idea is that people get desensitized when systematically exposed to an unpleasant emotion again and again.

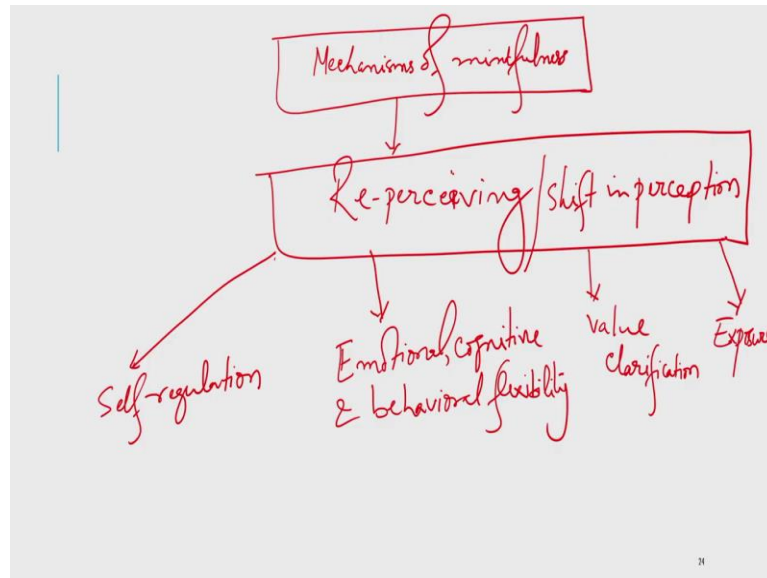
Mindfulness brings about many positive changes by the principle of exposure. In mindfulness, we connect directly with the moment to moment experiences including negative emotions and observe them without avoidance and resistance. This approach reduces our negative, maladaptive, and neurotic emotional patterns such as phobias, anxieties etc.

All these mechanisms may lead to many associated positive outcomes discussed earlier.

Exposure is another mechanism by which mindfulness brings about positive changes. Exposure strategy is commonly utilized in phobia treatment. People who exaggerate their fear of anything, for example, some people are terrified of going to elevators, others are terrified of going to closed spaces, and yet others are terrified of heights. So these are specific phobias for which exposure therapy can be beneficial. So they are gradually, gradually, systematically introduced to the things they fear. So they gradually learn to confront them, and when they do so, their fear diminishes. Likewise, what happens. The main premise behind exposure is that people get desensitized when they are repeatedly exposed to an unpleasant emotion in a systemic manner. Because we tend to avoid unpleasant emotions. As a result, we were never able to deal with them. So, slowly, slowly, if you teach individuals to systematically get exposed to the things they are afraid of, which are illogical fear and other things, then slowly, slowly, they mastered those things and are no longer that fearful. This is what exposure therapy accomplishes. The principle of exposure underpins many of the positive improvements brought about by mindfulness. Mindfulness allows us to engage deeply with our present-moment experiences. So you're not fleeing or becoming engrossed in your feelings and thoughts. You are simply observing, facing, and looking at them without passing judgment on them. So you're kind of exposed to them and facing them without reacting, so emotion has less of an influence, but you're also facing them, not running away from them. And you learnt how to watch them without avoiding or resisting them. As a result, this exposure therapy is also occurring in mindfulness. As a result, this method

minimizes our unpleasant, maladaptive, and neurotic emotional problems such as phobias and anxiety. By practicing mindfulness, many of these negative psychological conditions may be alleviated. So, as we have discussed, all of these mechanisms may result in a variety of positive outcomes. Why does mindfulness result in all of these positive outcomes? These are some possible mechanisms.

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So, if I just draw it that way. So, in terms of bringing about beneficial changes within us, the mechanisms of mindfulness is primarily known as reperceiving, which essentially means a shift in perception. Perception alters in certain ways by dis-identifying from the continuous stream of thoughts and emotions, and this reperceiving performs other functions such as self-regulation, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral flexibility, value clarification, and exposure. So this is how we might depict the mechanisms of mindfulness diagrammatically.

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Instructions for Mindfulness Practice

So let me just give you a quick overview of how to practice mindfulness in the end. So it won't be very detailed, but it will be brief, and you will get a flavor of what mindfulness is like because many times when we just talk about theoretical parts, you may not comprehend what it is because you are using so many technical terminology and other things. So, just from your own personal experience, you may get a sense of what mindfulness is like. So I'll just give you some quick instructions for this. You may follow that and get a sense of what mindfulness is.

So, for mindfulness meditation, you can begin by sitting in a comfortable and relaxed position. As a result, relaxation is essential. So, try to relax your body as much as possible and sit in a comfortable position. So, basically, you should be very calm but very alert, mentally attentive but physically relaxed. As a result, it is always preferable to begin in a sitting position because it allows you to become more alert. It is especially beneficial to close your eyes at the start of practice because it strengthens our inward focus. When you open your eyes, you are immediately distracted by a plethora of perceptual objects. So you can sit in a really comfortable and alert position by closing your eyes.

So the concept of mindfulness is that you must first come to the present moment. So close your eyes and find a comfortable place to sit, whether on the floor or in a chair. Now return to the present moment by focusing on your felt sense of your body; simply return to the present moment and be with your felt sense of your body; return to your body. Whatever thoughts you have, just ignore them and sense, sense how your body feels, how it is sitting on a chair or maybe

on the floor, what sensations are going on, just feel the sense of the body, come with the body, don't think about it, don't think about your past or future, just be in the present moment with your body, with the sense of your body.

Observe your body, feel for any tensions or specific feelings, and simply observe them. Pay attention to your breathing gently now, and use it as your anchor for the present moment. By focusing on our breath, we may easily bring ourselves to the present moment. So when I say focus on your breathing, I don't mean change your breathing rhythm; I mean simply watch your natural breathing rhythm. Simply monitor your breaths as they come in and out. So the breath happens on its own; you are not doing anything. It happens on its own; all you have to do is witness it. Going in and out, simply observing. It is relatively simple to return to the present moment by focusing on the breath. As a result, use your breath as a focal point for your focus. You can widen your mindfulness to other internal and external stimuli once you have sufficiently established yourself in the present moment by focusing on your breath.

You can now pay attention to the sounds around you, simply hear them, whatever they are, whether they are fan sounds, AC sounds, or distant bird chirpings, whatever they are, just listen to them. Don't even think about it. Do not say if the sound is nice or bad; simply listen. Simply become your ear, and listen to whatever is available.

This is what mindfulness involves. Observing and paying attention without passing judgment. Simply pay attention. Don't think, just listen. If your mind wanders throughout this process, return to your breathing and return to the present moment to your felt awareness of the body. Similarly, you can broaden your mindfulness to include other sensory modalities like smell. If there are any smells around you, simply observe and notice them. Slowly, gradually, you may extend your mindfulness to your thoughts and images that are always running through your mind. Simply observe your thoughts and self-talk that is constantly going on in your mind. Do not say it is a good thinking or a negative thinking. Just observe. Thoughts pass in and out of my head. They are constantly coming and disappearing. You are not required to do anything. Thoughts, by definition, cannot stay; they come and go. If you hold to them, if you identify with them, they will bother you and intensify. They will come and leave if you merely observe them neutrally without identifying as a witness, impartial witness. Slowly, gradually, their frequencies

will diminish, and after a few moments, you may notice that very few thoughts are actually coming because you are not being identified, interested, and involved in them, and you are not becoming lost in them. Just observe them. Thoughts and images come and go; all you can do is to observe. They will never stay, and will eventually depart. So simply observe without any particular interest. So, when observing thoughts, you may find yourself regularly lost in them, in some future thoughts, in some past thoughts. If such a distraction occurs, return to the present moment and observe your breaths, both incoming and exiting. As a result, use your breathing as an anchor point for the present moment. Whenever you become distracted, begin focusing on your breathing without changing it; simply notice it.

In this way, you can broaden your mindfulness to include emotions, both gross and subtle. Emotions, like thoughts, can appear, stay for a while, and then leave. If you do not fight them, if you do not become engrossed with them, they will leave your system on their own. So just observe them, don't fight with them, don't resist them, don't criticize them, just be a witness to them.

In this way, you can gradually improve your mindfulness. So this is the state of consciousness known as nonreactive, nonjudgmental, simply witnessing and observing without any particular interest. So like this, you can open your eyes and you can deepen this practice by training your attention like that. So the idea is that you come to the present moment and watch whatever is happening, whether it is a thought, an emotion, or something else. So you stay present, really present in the moment, and there aren't many problems in the present. All of our issues are caused by our thinking about the past and the future. We are never completely in the present moment.

So mindfulness assists you in remaining in the present moment, being grounded in the present moment, and observing whatever is going on. So this is the condition and this is the taste that you might name mindfulness. So practice can improve it, and this can have a lot of benefits in terms of stress management, addressing mental illnesses, and so on. So you can have more specific guidelines and more detailed instructions. They are available in so many websites, you can find them and practice them. So with this, I end today's lecture. Thank you.