

# **Art Therapy, Mindfulness and Adult Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse**

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# The Science of Meditation and Mindfulness

[TIME Magazine: January 10, 2006](#)

**meditation reduces stress and changes brain size**

[New York Times: February 4, 2003](#)

**on the scientific study of meditation and its relation to overall happiness**

[A Conceptual and Empirical Review of Mindfulness as a Clinical intervention](#)

**Baer's 2003 review of the literature, which concludes that mindfulness interventions may help to improve psychological functioning and alleviate certain clinical conditions**

# Mindfulness and Meditation

**"Whenever your  
mind becomes  
scattered, use your  
breath as the means  
to take hold of your  
mind again.....  
Breath is a tool.  
Breath itself is  
mindfulness."**



# Breathing Peace

**Breathing in, I know I am breathing in.**

**Breathing out, I know I am breathing out.**

**Breathing in, I see myself as a flower.**

**Breathing out, I feel fresh.**

**Breathing in, I see myself as a mountain.**

**Breathing out, I feel solid.**

**Breathing in, I see myself as still water.**

**Breathing out, I reflect things as they are.**

**Thick Nhat Hanh (1987)**

# Mindfulness and Choice

**“Mindfulness teaches us to notice our thoughts, feelings, and bodily sensations without immediately categorizing them as good or bad. We learn to be more compassionate toward ourselves, responding to our thoughts and feelings as a friend might, rather than as a slave to a master. Rather than be overwhelmed or ruled by our feelings, we become better able to choose how we want to feel and act in difficult situations.”**

**Susan Nolen-Hoksesema, Ph.D**

***Eating, Drinking, Over-thinking (2005)***

# Mindfulness and Mental Health

- Addictions
- Borderline Personality Disorder
- Depression
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder
- Anxiety
- Trauma
- Grief and Loss
- Attention Deficit Disorder

# Mindlessness

- **Autopilot**
- **Addictions**
- **Absent-minded multi-tasking**
- **Procrastination**

# Mindfulness Skills

- **Concentration**
- **Attention**
- **Awareness**
- **Focus**
- **Choice**

# UNDISCIPLINED THOUGHT: MONKEY MIND



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# Accept and Commit

**“I can feel guilty (sad, angry, disappointed) about the past, apprehensive about the future, but only in the present can I act. The ability to be in the present moment is a major component of mental wellness.”**

# Disciplined Attention

Past







PRESENT



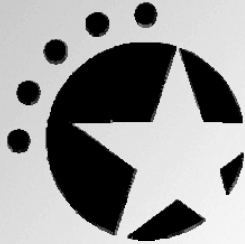
Future



# B.E.S.T. Mindfulness

<b>Behavior</b>		
<b>Environment/Event</b>		
<b>Sensations/Feelings</b>		
<b>Thoughts</b>		

**The S.T.A.R.T. Program  
for Adult Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse  
Survivors and Thrivers Achieve Respect  
Together**

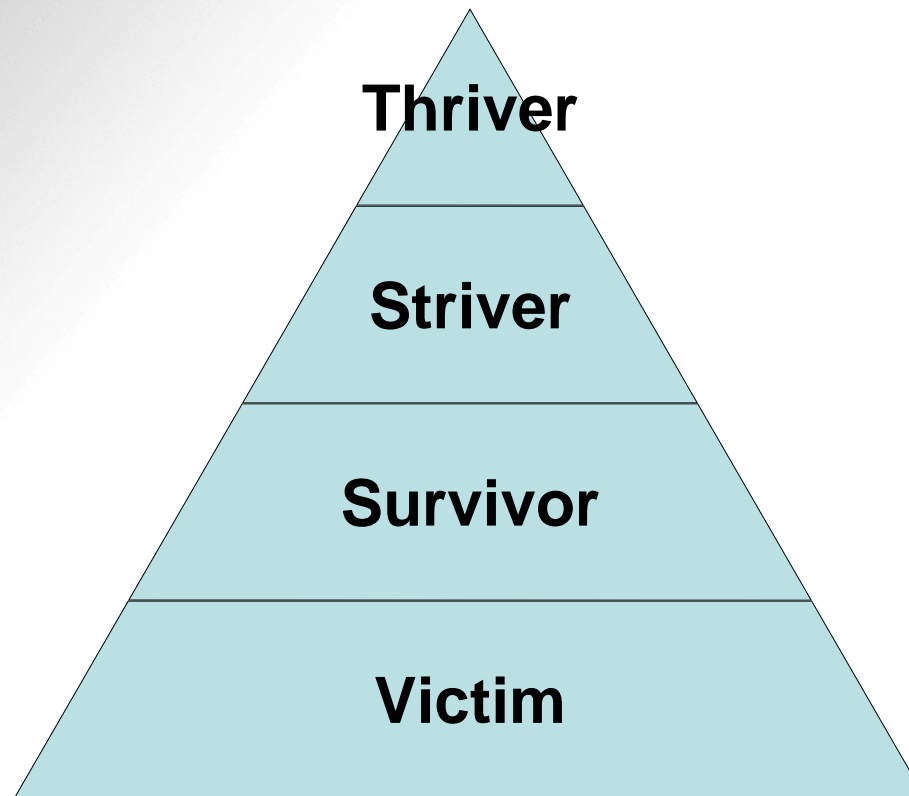


***MOCOSA***  
***Metropolitan Organization to Counter Sexual Assault***  
**3217 Broadway, Ste 500**  
**Kansas City, MO 64111**

**816.931.4527**  
**[www.mocsa.org](http://www.mocsa.org)**

**[rchow@mocsa.org](mailto:rchow@mocsa.org)**  
**[chiersteiner@mocsa.org](mailto:chiersteiner@mocsa.org)**

# Client Population



**Trauma  
Model**

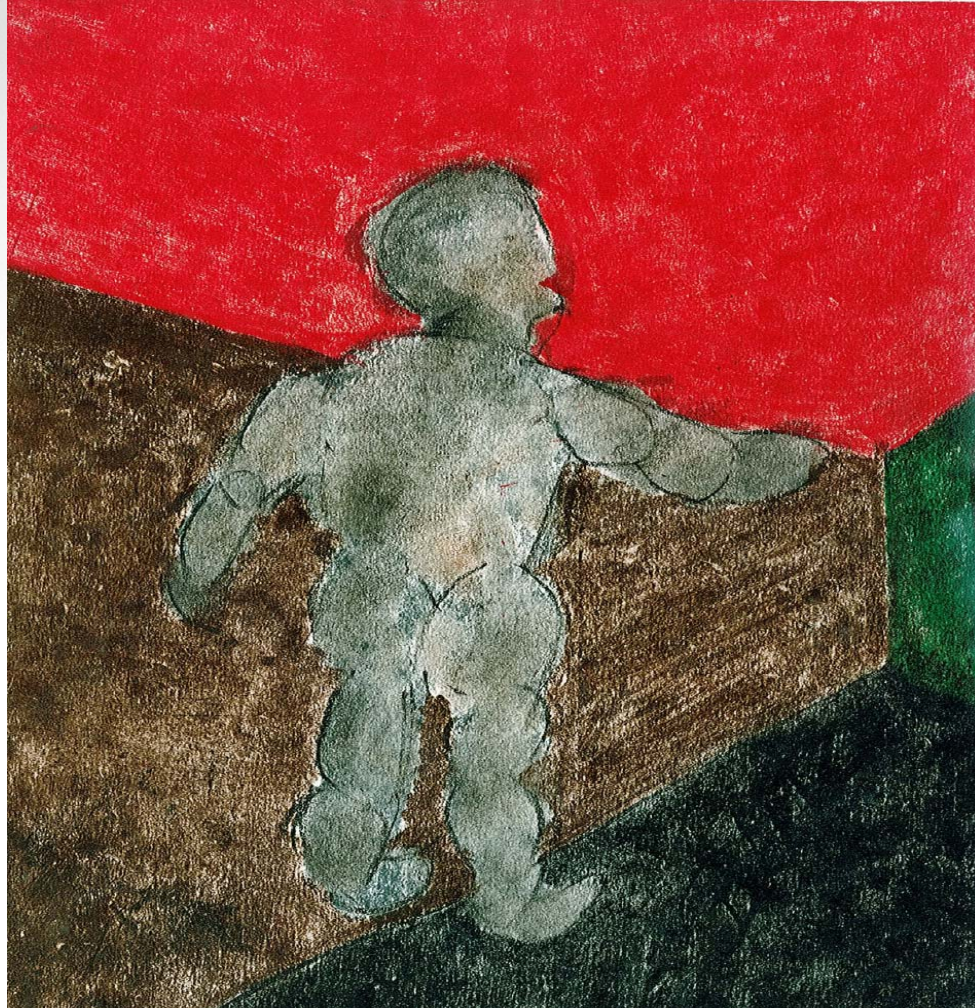


**Mindfulness  
Model**

**Making  
sense  
of the  
past**

**Being  
present  
in the  
present**

# Art and the Trauma Model



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# Art and Mindfulness



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## Sand Tray



Focusing in the here and now is a challenging skill for many adult survivors who may have learned to avoid awareness of inner and outer events. This activity will help participants observe their current experience (sensations, thoughts, and feelings) and describe it to others.

**Instructions:** After listening to a 15-minute Mindfulness tape, jot down a few notes about your experience with: thoughts, external sensations, internal sensations, and emotions. Use a sand tray and the miniatures to portray your four spheres of experience. Write down a title for your creation when you are finished and a brief paragraph about it. Describe your sand tray and share the details about your experience to the group.

## Mindfulness Collage



Focusing in the here and now is a challenging skill for many adult survivors who may have learned to avoid awareness of inner and outer events. Art activity will help participants observe their current experience (sensations, thoughts, and feelings) and describe it to others.

**Instructions:** After listening to a 15-minute Mindfulness audio, jot down a few notes about your experience with: Thoughts, External Sensations, Internal Sensations, and Emotions. Use collage materials to portray your four spheres of experience. Write down a title for your creation when you are finished and a brief paragraph about it. Describe your picture and share the details about your experience to the group.

## Inside/Outside Box



**Instructions:** After listening to a 6-minute Mindfulness audio, use magazine pictures, colors, and objects to decorate a small cardboard box.

On the inside of the box, portray “Myself, when I am alone.”

On the outside of the box, portray, “Myself with others.”

Place the completed box on a large piece of paper. Draw a picture about “a change you could make tomorrow so that your experience, either alone or with others, might be different two years from now.

Write a title for your picture with at least 5 words.

Discuss your art creation with the group.

## Frame Project



Problematic internal events (thoughts, feelings, sensations) can haunt adult survivors every day, interfering with their ability to live a quality life. This art project will help you target a recurring problem and to express and explore ways to resolve or manage the problem.

**Instructions:** After listening to the mindfulness audio, focus on one troubling thought, feeling, sensation, or behavior that you are struggling with. Use art materials (paint, crayons, collage materials) to portray this experience in the middle of the frame. Around the frame, display your coping mechanisms: ways to prevent this distress from occurring, how you manage the problem when it occurs, and ways to lessen this distress in the future. Make a title for your project and share it with the group. Write a short paragraph to describe your artwork.

## Sand Bottle

People normally experience a wide range of feelings—both pleasant and unpleasant. Some feelings are intense and others are subtle. Some are long-lasting and others are fleeting. Certain feelings arise on a regular basis and others only on rare occasions. Some feelings are readily revealed to other people and other feelings are usually hidden. Some feelings are easily tolerated, whereas others are extremely difficult to endure. This art experience will help you acknowledge, tolerate, and express a diversity specific emotions.

**Instructions:** See the attached list of feelings, to help you identify your own. Choose a color of sand to represent the following. Layer the sand in the bottle in your own unique pattern:

A feeling you often reveal to others

A feeling you generally keep to yourself

A feeling that has increased in intensity since the trauma

A feeling you wish would go away, never to return again

A feeling you like to have

A feeling you can live with, but one that challenges you

A feeling you rarely experience and wish you could have more often



## Support Network



Support systems are made of individuals and organizations that help you continue on in the face of adversity. They provide the hope, spirit, and encouragement you need to participate fully in your day-to-day life and personal development. As your needs change, so does your support system, which requires skillful maintenance to keep it strong and intact.

**Instructions:** Weave colored strips of paper into a grid. The warp strands will represent people and places that make up your support system right now. The weft strands will represent skills that you utilize to keep your network in good working order. Include at least one strand to represent a future person or place that you hope to include in your network and a new skill that you are practicing to keep your network flexible and secure. Paste your grid onto a piece of cardboard in a shape of your choice. Decorate it further, if you would like. Give a title to your artwork and write a short paragraph about it.

## Mindfulness Doll



Materials: Muslin. Buttons. Ribbon. Yarn. Needle and thread. This doll-making project focuses on mindfulness, self-awareness, and staying connected to personal strengths and values.

**Instructions:** After participating in a 15-minute Mindfulness meditation, create a muslin doll with three themes (See lists below) : (1) predominant, bothersome thoughts, sensations, and emotions (2) strengths and skills for managing troubles an distress and (3) personal values to guide future growth and change.

Listen to a 15-minute audio that focuses on mindful awareness of here-and-now experience and take a few notes at the end. Choose a pre-sewn muslin doll body in a color that you like. Stuff the doll body with fiberfill. Using an assortment of buttons, ribbons, and other surface ornaments.

Decorate your doll to show (1) distress you noticed during the Mindfulness Meditation, something you struggle with (2) coping skills needed to manage this distress and (3) something or someone you value to help you make changes or improve managing your distress. Use the large darning needle and colored needlepoint yarn to attach the buttons.

Dolls should have a primitive, child-like quality so that you can let of any perfectionistic qualities!

Write or sew a name for your Mindfulness Doll on the body. Discuss your creation with group members.

## Compassion Cube



For adult survivors of child sexual abuse, feeling peaceful and practicing compassion towards themselves and others can be challenging.

What is compassion? It feels like gentle friendship, given and received. It is a sense of feeling hope for and confidence in yourself and others, of being gentle, caring, and kind.

**Instructions:** After listening to the Compassion Meditation (6 minutes), create an art piece with the acrylic cube using colors, lines, shapes, found objects and images to describe what compassion means to you. Include the following dimensions in your creation: (a) yourself and others and (b) Giving and receiving. There are 12 visible surfaces available for expression.... As well as inside and outside spaces to consider. Use the cube as a reminder to be mindful of compassion every day.

## Turning Points



An epiphany is a turning point, an intuitive leap of understanding that happens during an ordinary but striking experience. The result is some sort of significant change in thought, feeling, or behavior. Adult survivors often describe such turning points in their lives. This art activity focuses on turning points in your past as well as epiphanies you hope to have in your future.

**Instructions:** For the assignment below, depict an actual pictorial scene, including yourself in the picture (no stick figures). Or draw an abstract picture, using colors, lines, shapes, words to describe the turning point. (1) Draw a picture about an epiphany you have had in the past, focusing on the change that occurred in your life as a result. (2) Draw a picture of a turning point you hope to experience some time in the future, again focusing on a change you hope will occur in your life as a result. Title each picture.



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## Mindfulness Resources

### For Clients

- Chodron. (2001). *The Places that Scare You : A Guide to Fearlessness in Difficult Times.*
- Cohen, B. et al. (1995). *Managing Traumatic Stress Through Art: Drawing from the Center.*
- Fishman. (2002). *Emotional Healing through Mindfulness Meditation: Stories and Meditations for Women Seeking Wholeness.*
- George. (1998). *Learn to Relax: A Practical Guide for Easing Tension & Conquering Stress.*
- Kabat-Zinn. (2005) *Coming to Our Senses: Healing Ourselves Through Mindfulness.*
- Kabat-Zinn. (1993) *Wherever You Go, There You Are: Mindfulness in Everyday Life.*
- Naparstek. (2004). *Invisible Heroes: Survivors of Trauma and How They Heal.*

### For Therapists

- Bien. (2006). *Mindful Therapy: A Guide for Therapists and Helping Professionals.*
- Cohen. (1995). *Managing Traumatic Stress Through Art: Drawing from the Center.*
- Hayes. (1999). *Mindfulness and Acceptance: Expanding the Cognitive-Behavioral Tradition.*
- Germer. (2005). *Mindfulness and Psychotherapy.*
- Linehan. (1993). *Cognitive-Behavioral Treatment of Borderline Personality Disorder.*

Handouts can be download at:

<http://www.alltherapytalk.com>