

Table of Contents



Introduction.....	ix
How To Use This Book.....	x
Materials For Warm-Ups.....	xi
Chapter 1 Mindfulness.....	1
Chapter 2 Self-Awareness.....	21
Chapter 3 Self-Esteem & Self-Compassion.....	57
Chapter 4 Connections & Relationships.....	85
Chapter 5 Change & Problem-Solving.....	103
Chapter 6 Anxiety & Stress.....	131
Chapter 7 CBT-Based: Thought, Emotion, Behavior.....	157
Chapter 8 Stimulating & Thought-Provoking.....	177
Notes & Credits.....	203

Introduction



When a client walks into a therapy room, he may not know what to expect. He might be anxious, unsure, and fearful. He doesn't know what his role will be and he may fear others won't accept him or think he is unintelligent or unworthy. It takes time for individuals to get used to therapy, whether it is group or individual therapy. Rushing right into deep discussion may create undue stress, and support unhealthy behaviors such as withdrawing, talking too much, acting silly or sarcastic, or leaving the room to alleviate anxiety.

A group that begins with introductions and then a brief warm-up provides a gradual and calming transition into more intensive therapy. Providing the client with a safe and welcoming environment helps him better acclimate to the group environment, other group members, and the therapist who is leading the session. Clients want to know they can fit in and interact appropriately.

Beginning a group gradually using creative warm-ups allows individuals to introduce and express themselves, and experience therapy in a non-threatening and welcoming manner. Warm-up exercises provide a way to test the waters. The client can get a feel for his role in the group, how it is run, its norms and structure, and how individuals tend to interact with each other. He begins making connections almost immediately by sharing the work created during the warm-up exercise. The warm-ups can also be used as effectively in individual sessions, and with people who want to enhance their self-awareness and expand upon their creativity.

Warm-ups can be considered "mental stretching." They are usually five to ten minutes in length and help clients become familiar with drawing, self-expression and communicating with others. The warm-ups are relatively simple and provide an almost guaranteed successful outcome, which increases self-esteem and makes it more likely that the client will feel comfortable and share issues and concerns. A sense of mastery is gained since it is almost impossible to "fail." Very little is required or expected, and the participant is reassured that he is in charge; there is no right or wrong way to approach the warm-up. The warm-ups are never judged; the results are explored and the client decides when, how, and with whom he will share his artwork. These creative exercises provide those mini successes so necessary for motivation and full engagement in therapy. Individuals gain self-esteem by taking tiny steps forward.

Clients often take a lighthearted approach to the warm-ups. Sometimes simply because they are called *warm-ups*, and participants know they will not be judged or coerced to do or say something that is too stressful. It is just this relaxed approach and attitude that makes warm-ups so powerful. When clients are not worried about how their work looks or how they come across to others, they frequently let their guard down and share more issues and feelings than they might do otherwise.

If a client discounts his work during the warm-up, it is common for other group members to support him and encourage him to continue working, and not worry about the end product. This interaction becomes the client's first bonding experience with the group. In one recent session, a client named Bob wanted to throw his work out; he thought it was ugly and messy. When he started crumpling it up and walking towards the garbage can, a few veteran clients pleaded with him to keep it. They told him his work was valuable and all that counted was self-expression. They knew drawing ability was not mandatory. The appearance of the work is unimportant; one does not need to be an artist or have drawing ability to

1

Chapter

Mindfulness

Mindfulness helps people experience peace and serenity. Mindfulness has origins in Eastern philosophy and Buddhism, but individuals do not need to be religious or even spiritual to practice it. According to Jon Kabat-Zinn: “Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way; on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally.”¹ “Mindfulness is about observation without criticism; being compassionate with yourself. In essence, mindfulness allows you to catch negative thought patterns before they tip you into a downward spiral. It begins the process of putting you back in control of your life.”² “Mindfulness is a way of observing our experience, in the present moment, without judgement. Mindfulness helps us ‘defuse’ - to distance ourselves from unhelpful thoughts, reactions and sensations.”³

When an individual is mindful he is fully aware of his senses and experiences. The client is encouraged to accept his thoughts, feelings and behaviors and not to judge them. He doesn't dwell on the past or on feelings of guilt. Individuals are encouraged to focus their full attention on what they are currently experiencing and to let their incoming thoughts gently flow away. Attention, or awareness, is the central feature of mindfulness. “Mindfulness is a skill that allows us to be less reactive to what is happening in the moment. It is a way of relating to all experience—positive, negative and neutral—such that our overall suffering is reduced and our sense of well-being increases.”⁴

Core features of mindfulness include observing, describing, participating fully and being non-judgmental and concentrating on one thing at a time.

Mindfulness can include techniques such as deep breathing, focusing on one's breath, observing one's thoughts, and creative techniques such as mandala design, drawing a flower in detail or listening to music. It might incorporate methods such as staring at an object to view it fully. It might comprise being aware of all one's senses at one time. Mindfulness practice is about learning to control one's own mind, rather than being at the mercy of it, which may result in rumination and extreme stress.

Mindfulness improves both mental and physical health. It reduces anxiety and helps individuals find pleasure in life. It lessens worries and regrets, and helps people enjoy relationships and activities. Self-esteem increases as worry and concern about what others think diminishes and control over one's life increases. Pain and obsessive thoughts often seem to decrease.

Focusing on the moment generates energy, clear-headedness and might help individuals develop new habits that help to weaken negative patterns of thinking and behavior.

EXPLORING THE SENSES 1

PROCEDURE: Clients close their eyes, take a deep breath, and draw what they see, hear, feel, touch or smell.

QUESTIONS FOR EXPLORATION:

1. What was your experience like?
2. What did you represent on the paper?
3. Which of your senses is most significant to you?
4. Which sense are you focusing on right now?
5. How can you use your senses to reduce stress and be in the moment?

CLIENT RESPONSES:

Devin, a woman in her fifties, challenged with anxiety and depression, drew an exotic island as her "escape." She stated she visualized an island in the Caribbean, complete with pineapple trees, a bright sun, sparkling clear blue water, and majestic trees towering over a stretch of warm, welcoming sand. Mountains were situated in the background. Devin remarked that observing the scene created calmness within her, and she wanted to stay with the feeling as long as possible. She remarked she could almost feel a slight breeze while inhaling the fragrance of wildflowers and clean, fresh air.

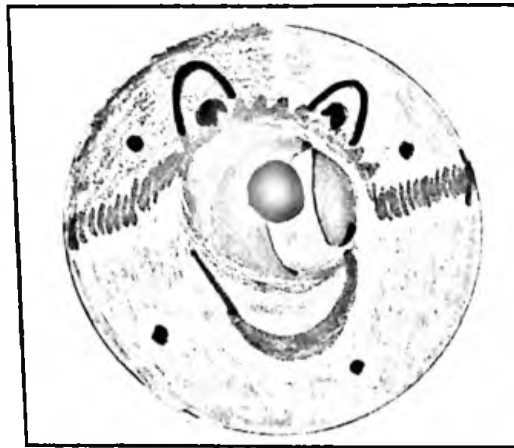
Maggie, a young woman in her twenties, also challenged with depression and anxiety, drew a tropical jungle scene with lots of greenery. She shared that she felt like she was in the middle of a plush jungle enjoying its sights and sounds as well as the "moist, pleasant air and warm temperature." She stated she felt welcomed and safe, as if the greenery was protecting her from any danger that might come her way. Maggie remarked that she felt "stupid" for drawing a jungle scene, but that was the first thing that came to mind. She was reassured that her visualization was valid and important, and could be used to reduce stress and as a reminder to be mindful.

MINI MANDALA

PROCEDURE: Outline a circle from the top rim of a large paper cup and color it in from the inside out.

QUESTIONS FOR EXPLORATION:

1. What type of image or design was formed?
2. Did you choose to stay within the circle or did you venture out of the circle?
What does that say about your personality?
3. Can you think of a title for the mandala?



This warm up is useful for most populations because it is quick, easy and helps individuals focus and express their ideas. It provides structure, but participants can also choose to draw outside of the circle if they desire. Many clients like to design at least two or three mandalas if possible.⁵

CLIENT RESPONSE:

A 44-year-old client named Sid, diagnosed with bipolar disorder, designed this creative mandala. It began as a light pencil drawing of a face, and then he added color and more design in order to transform the face into a planet. Sid called the mandala, "a planet with a face." He decided to continue adding to the planet, while sharing that "it was important to expand upon this idea." He created a Saturn-like planet in the solar system, which he titled "HTRAE." This is earth spelled backwards.

Sid emphasized the importance of thinking outside of the box and he emphasized how it helps but also hurts him to be an innovative thinker. He gave the example of a recent incident in group. A peer asked Sid what he had in his lunch bag and he replied, "A bomb." He was joking and thought it was funny, but the staff at the short-term psychiatric facility was not amused. He was strongly confronted and told never to refer to the subject of weapons or bombs again. Sid understood the seriousness of his actions but stated that there are too many limits on what we say and do in this "anal society."

DRAWING BLIND

PROCEDURE: Draw with your eyes closed. Create any type of design or image. It may be abstract or realistic.

QUESTIONS FOR EXPLORATION:

1. How challenging was this exercise?
2. What are the benefits of doing artwork in this manner?
3. Did you find you were more or less mindful while drawing?

CLIENT RESPONSE:

Madeline, a 60-year-old woman challenged with alcohol and opiate addiction, drew the profile of her son Jack, whom she hasn't seen for nearly a year. When she viewed her sketch, she shared, "the sketch doesn't look like much of anything, but it represents my son in many ways." She said she often thinks of her son and misses him greatly. "He lives in another state and chooses not to see me because he's angry at me." Madeline shared that her son has been disappointed repeatedly by her erratic and selfish behavior. She sighed, "He doesn't trust anything I say or do."

According to Madeline, he still carries a grudge because Madeline was an irresponsible parent, who frequently left Jack alone at a young age. Madeline said she knew Jack was envious of his friends' mothers who were helping with homework, showing love and devotion, and "doing motherly things like cleaning the house, baking cookies for school functions, and making dinner." Madeline stated she knows she has been terribly irresponsible, but she wants to change now. She also acknowledged that she has to be patient and prove to Jack that she will maintain her sobriety. Madeline was cognizant of the fact that earning trust would take a very long time.

MINDFUL SPIRAL

PROCEDURE: Draw a spiral design, focusing on being spontaneous and in the moment. A spiral looks like a curl, coil or corkscrew, and often radiates out or winds inward, closer to a central point.

QUESTIONS FOR EXPLORATION:

1. What does the spiral look like? Does it remind you of anything in particular?
2. Is it simple or complicated?
3. Did you begin from the middle spreading outwards or from the top down (inwards)?
4. How could the presentation of the spiral reflect personality traits and mood?
5. What feelings or images are elicited by it?
6. Do you ever feel like you are spiraling in some way?

CLIENT RESPONSE:

Leah, a woman in her mid-sixties, drew a large, colorful spiral that almost seemed to bounce off the page. Leah remarked that the spiral reminded her of herself because she had been overindulging in food, shopping, spending and "anything else you can imagine," due to her bipolar disorder spiraling out of control. Leah shared that she stopped taking her medicine a few weeks before because she felt wonderful and full of energy; she didn't want "to come down off my high."

Her husband flipped, according to Leah, when he received a bill from a department store for three thousand dollars. He told Leah she had no choice but to get help immediately. Leah reluctantly agreed, knowing her frivolous and careless behavior would eventually ruin her marriage and her finances. In addition, she wasn't sleeping and she was over-eating. She gained over 10 pounds in two weeks, which she knew would eventually cause her to feel depressed and stressed.

MINI MANDALOODLE

PROCEDURE: Provide the outline of a small circle (about 3 -4 inches in diameter). Participants color it in with a doodle design, allowing the shapes and lines to interconnect in any way they desire, preferably using black marker or colors if desired.

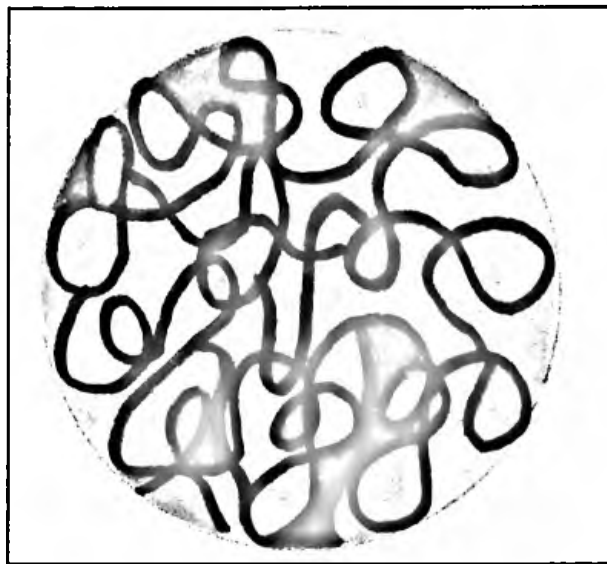
A Mandaloodle is a mandala doodle. The circle is filled in with doodles of all sorts.

QUESTIONS FOR EXPLORATION:

1. How does it feel to "let your thoughts roll" and not worry about the outcome of the design?
2. How does designing the Mandaloodle create a feeling of calm and being in the moment?

CLIENT RESPONSE:

Anita, a 21-year-old woman challenged with bipolar disorder, drew a squiggle mandala below to represent her anxiety and "mixed-up thinking." She shared that she enjoyed this exercise because, although her thoughts were scattered, she was able to contain them in the circle, which provided her with a temporary sense of well-being. Anita shared she enjoyed not having to worry about the outcome of the design, and she was pleasantly surprised when it turned out "so well." She remarked she would try to create Mandaloodles whenever she felt anxious.



PEACE AND SERENITY

PROCEDURE: Draw a design representing peace and serenity.

QUESTIONS FOR EXPLORATION:

1. How can you attain the serenity depicted in the design?
2. When was the last time you felt peaceful?
3. What does peace feel like and look like? What are the colors, shapes, lines and images like?

CLIENT RESPONSE:

A 59-year-old man named Craig sketched a scene of two figures sitting in a small boat, fishing on a tranquil blue lake. Craig shared that the figures symbolized his son and himself. He remarked that his son is now married and living in another state, but they have always been very close, and over the years spent much time sharing interests, such as fishing, baseball and football.

Craig mentioned that when he thinks of those wonderful times, he feels peaceful and full of love for his son. He asserted that although his best friend Jim isn't as good of company as his son, Jim is now his substitute fishing buddy, and they both have a great time engaging in their favorite sport.

FOCUS WITHIN

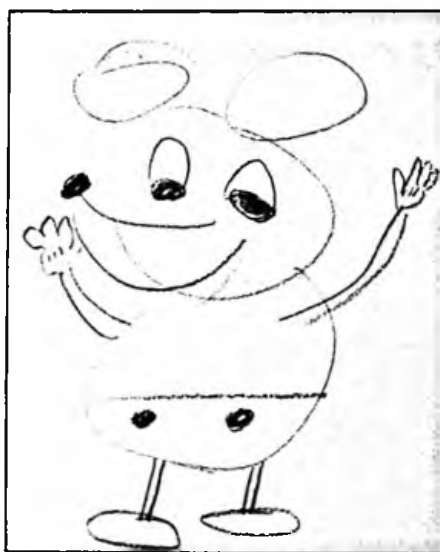
PROCEDURE: Draw your "center." Think about your body as well as your spiritual center.

QUESTIONS FOR EXPLORATION:

1. Where is your center?
2. What do you like to focus your attention on?
3. When was the last time you felt centered?
4. How did it feel?

CLIENT RESPONSE:

Xavier, a 47-year-old man challenged with bipolar disorder, drew Mickey Mouse below. He shared that Mickey Mouse is a beloved iconic character that he and his family have loved for years. He said he smiles and always feels better when he looks at the cartoon figure. Xavier remarked that some of his happiest experiences were when he took his two young sons to Disney World about 10 years ago. He reminisced, sharing that they went on the rides, stayed at a Hawaiian-themed hotel, ate breakfast with Mickey, and experienced all that Disney had to offer. He chuckled, "It sounds funny for Mickey Mouse to be my center, but Mickey Mouse lifts my spirits." He mentioned he owns expensive Disney artwork, sculptures and other unique items. At the time of this exercise, Xavier was wearing a Disney teeshirt and Mickey Mouse socks, which group members found very amusing.



EXPLORING THE SENSES II

PROCEDURE: Draw one thing you see, one thing you hear, one thing you feel and one thing you smell.

QUESTIONS FOR EXPLORATION:

1. How does mindfulness of your surroundings help you relax?
2. How can your environment affect your stress level?
3. What type of environment do you find most therapeutic?

CLIENT RESPONSE:

A 58-year-old woman named Antonia, who had been having difficulty with her grown son, drew a dark cloud to represent what she sees (actually the sun was shining and there were no clouds in the sky). She drew a sketchy dark green line to symbolize the humming of "annoying" background voices emanating from another room; she created a brick to represent the feel of the art table in front of her, and she drew a dark circle of sinewy smoke to represent what she smells.

In reality, there was only the faint scent of hand wash in the air, but Antonia felt so miserable and angry that her senses "were distorted." She also added a small figure (herself) being hammered by a large mallet (her son). She remarked that the previous day her son and she had had a heated argument and he had said many hateful and bitter things to her. His last words were that he never wanted to see her again. Antonia felt devastated.

RESTING MIND

PROCEDURES: Symbolize your mind at rest. In your drawing, depict the calmness and peacefulness associated with being mindful.

QUESTIONS FOR EXPLORATION:

1. What types of shapes, images and colors were used to portray your mind?
2. Describe the way your mind usually works (e.g., calm, chaotic, swirling thoughts, negative thoughts, positive thoughts, confused, focused, etc.).
3. How can being mindful contribute to a calmer and happier life?
4. What does mindfulness mean to you?
5. What part of your life/lifestyle would benefit most from being mindful?

CLIENT RESPONSE:

Heather, a 28-year-old woman with depression, drew a lightly colored amorphous shape "sitting on a cloud." Heather shared that it was rare that her mind was at rest, but when she was able to relax she felt at peace and sometimes like she was "floating on a cloud." She commented that smoking marijuana used to make her feel serene, but eventually the marijuana "turned on her" and made her feel depressed and a little paranoid. She shared she is trying to reduce stress by exercising at the gym, journaling, sketching, listening to guided imagery and calming music, and taking more walks in the park.

EXPERIENCING THE “NOW”

PROCEDURE: Draw where you are in the moment.

QUESTIONS FOR EXPLORATION:

1. How did you portray yourself? Consider size, shape, color, expression, position on the paper, etc.
2. Think about where you are physically and/or emotionally (e.g. Are you focused on what is happening now, or are you dwelling on past or future events?).
3. Are you where you want to be right now? Think about where you are emotionally and what your environment and relationships are like at this point in your life.
4. Would you like to change? If so, how can you begin to transform yourself and your life?

CLIENT RESPONSE:

Sharon, a 59-year-old woman with anxiety issues, drew herself with other family members, below, in a hospital room watching her sleeping father, who was trying to recover from a severe illness. She shared that she was seated on the right next to her mother, who was speaking to her sister-in-law. Sharon stated that she felt stressed and worried; she was daydreaming about happier times. She wished things could be different and imagined her and her family enjoying a delicious meal at a favorite restaurant instead of gathering at the hospital. When asked, she explained that she coped by taking one day at a time.

