

# **CROSS-CULTURAL, TRANS-CULTURAL, AND GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ON MINDFULNESS: LESSONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS FROM COMPARING MINDFULNESS-BASED COGNITIVE THERAPY AND MORITA PSYCHOTHERAPY FROM JAPAN**

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**Background:** A reduction in self-referential processing stands as one of the central therapeutic mechanisms of modern mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs). However, the concept of self can vary significantly between cultures that value individualism versus collectivism, which poses questions to how MBIs work under different cultural contexts.

**Aim:** Comparing two cultural variations of mindfulness-based psychotherapy: Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT), developed recently in the West, and Morita Therapy, founded in Japan during the 1920's based on Zen Buddhism.

**Methods:** Content analysis for primary literature and psychotherapy manuals written by the founders and other practitioners of the two mindfulness-based psychotherapies. Cross-cultural analysis was further contextualized with literatures from both psychological sciences and Buddhist studies.

**Results:** Despite the vast cultural/historical gap between them, the two psychotherapies are strikingly similar in several aspects of their therapeutic mechanisms, philosophies, and methods. The most significant similarity is that they both involve a change in the conception of 'self' via mindfulness, regardless of the individualistic or collectivist cultural context.

**Discussion:** In the era of MBIs, the modern concept of mindfulness has been secularized and decontextualized from its original Buddhist teachings; however, the change in concept of self, one of the original tenets of Buddhist teachings, remains an important therapeutic mechanism of clinical MBIs. In the past few years, mindfulness practice has been "re-imported" from the west to Japan, gaining momentum in both popular culture and clinical realms. In a country like Japan, where Zen Buddhism was already had a prominent presence, does cross-cultural exploration benefit its clinical applications? Are modern MBIs like MBCT equivocal to indigenous MBIs like Morita Therapy?

## Learning Objectives

At the conclusion of this presentation, participants will be able to:

1. Describe the basic structure and concepts of Morita Therapy and Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy.
2. Discuss the importance of cross-cultural exploration in the study of mindfulness-based interventions.

## References

1. Morita, Shoma. *Morita Therapy and the True Nature of Anxiety-Based Disorders (Shinkeishitsu)*. Translated by Akihisa Kondo. Edited by Peg Le Vine. Albany: New York Press, 1998.
2. Segal, Zindel V., Williams J. Mark G., and Teasdale, John D. *Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy for Depression* 2nd edition. New York: The Guilford Press, 2013.