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# Mindfulness-based stress reduction, mindfulness-based cognitive therapy, and Zen meditation for depression, anxiety, pain, and psychological distress

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## Abstract

Mindfulness has been described as a practice of learning to focus attention on moment-by-moment experience with an attitude of curiosity, openness, and acceptance. Mindfulness practices have become increasingly popular as complementary therapeutic strategies for a variety of medical and psychiatric conditions. This paper provides an overview of three mindfulness interventions that have demonstrated effectiveness for psychiatric symptoms and/or pain. The goal of this review is to provide a synopsis that practicing clinicians can use as a clinical reference concerning Zen meditation, mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR), and mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT). All three approaches originated from Buddhist spiritual practices, but only Zen is an actual Buddhist tradition. MBSR and MBCT are secular, clinically based methods that employ manuals and standardized techniques. Studies indicate that MBSR and MBCT have broad-spectrum antidepressant and antianxiety effects and decrease general psychological distress. MBCT is strongly recommended as an adjunctive treatment for unipolar depression. The evidence suggests that both MBSR and MBCT have efficacy as adjunctive interventions for anxiety symptoms. MBSR is beneficial for general psychological health and stress management in those with medical and psychiatric illness as well as in healthy individuals. Finally, MBSR and Zen meditation have a role in pain management.

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