



The Mindful Session

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In a recent meeting, this journal's editorial board—a group of old-timers, each with over 25 years of experience—meandered into a discussion about the many theoretical approaches to diabetes education that inform our profession. We shared which of these have influenced our own work with patients. Empowerment, shared decision making, motivational interviewing, self-determination theory, and the health belief model all were mentioned.

As the conversation continued, we all agreed that we do not think much about theory when preparing for or conducting a patient session. Instead, we focus on being intentionally aware and present for the person and the encounter. In other words, we practice mindfulness.

Mindfulness is defined as having intentional awareness in each moment without judgment. The practice can help facilitate connection and acceptance and encourage mutual involvement in decision making.

Meditation can help develop mindfulness, but a sincere effort to be awake, aware, and present is a good start. Use the following pointers to give it a try the next time you meet with a patient.

- Before the session, take a few slow breaths to help center yourself. Consider how you are feeling. (You can use breathing as a reminder to be present throughout the session.)
- Think about the patient you are going to see. Do you have preconceived ideas about this

person? What are your feelings or expectations about the individual or the session?

- Enter each patient session with "beginner's mind," as though you have no prior knowledge about the person. Do your best to set any agenda or judgments aside.
- After introductions, take a moment to "take in" the person you are meeting with. What do you sense and observe? What is written in their face? Their posture? How would you describe their energy? Let yourself tune in to this person. This might seem like a long process, but it becomes instant and effortless with practice. Keep your insights in mind as you proceed and let them inform your choices, words, and actions.
- Check in with yourself during the session. How is it going? Do you need to adjust or adapt to new information you've received, be it objective or subjective?
- Check in with the patient. Ask how they are feeling. Ask whether they are getting the infor-



mation and help they want and need. Listen and repeat back what you hear to make sure you understand. Take note, and then take a few conscious breaths as needed to ensure you are centered before proceeding.

- At the end of your time together, ask the patient to summarize the session in their own words. If goals have been set or instructions given, now is the perfect time to ask, "Just to be sure we have a shared understanding, please tell me what you are going to do between now and our next session."
- When you leave the session, take a moment to stop, breathe, and check in with yourself. Is there anything you wish you had done differently? Note this for learning and move on to your next mindful moment.
- Let each session go, without judging yourself or the patient.

Congratulations! You have just had a mindful session.

Remember, mindfulness is a practice. Practice makes for progress, not perfection. Set self-judgment aside and keep practicing. Each moment is a new beginning. ■

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BEING MINDFUL

- Listen respectfully and with an open mind.
- Ask open-ended questions.
- Let silence happen. Refrain from filling it with noise or chatter.
- Remain open and receptive to what occurs in the moment.
- Notice and release personal biases and judgments.
- Respond thoughtfully and with kindness.
- Observe my thoughts and actions with honesty and self-compassion.
- Acknowledge and appreciate my intention to learn and grow in mindfulness.

