

A CLINICIAN'S GUIDE

Mindfulness for Adult ADHD



Lidia Zylowska
John T. Mitchell

Foreword by Russell A. Barkley

Coping in Times of Crisis: Tips and Strategies from Guilford Experts

Q&A with John Mitchell, PhD, coauthor on *Mindfulness for Adult ADHD: A Clinician's Guide*

1. Congratulations on the publication of *Mindfulness for Adult ADHD*! Your book came out in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic, a time that has seen a surge in people seeking psychological help. How has this impacted your experience as an author/editor, and as a mental health professional?

Up until this book was published, there were no step-by-step guides for clinicians on how to carry out a mindfulness-based intervention for adults with ADHD. That was one of my main goals for the book—to make clinician materials more accessible so that clinicians could more easily implement a mindfulness treatment for adult ADHD. It just so happens that we released the book during a time when people are facing more stressors than usual with the COVID-19 pandemic, and mindfulness practices taught in the book have been shown to also help cope with stress. As a mental health professional, I'm pleased that we now have this book out so that clinicians who may want to add it to their clinical repertoire can now do so, which I hope will ultimately result in more adults with ADHD learning to effectively cope with the stress that comes along with the pandemic.

2. What aspects of your book make it stand out from others on a similar topic? Are there any features that make it uniquely suited to helping people cope during the pandemic? (For example, you emphasize self-compassion, which we could certainly all use right now!)

Mindfulness practices in general have been shown to help people manage stress. However, this book is particularly well-suited to help people cope during the pandemic because the meditation exercises are shorter and more gradual than in other mindfulness trainings. I think that having shorter exercises from the start would make mindfulness more appealing and accessible to others who are feeling stretched thin with time during the pandemic—it feels much more feasible to people to fit in a 5 minute exercise in the day than a 30 minute exercise. Also, the treatment emphasizes self-compassion, and that's very important during the pandemic when juggling a lot or not being able to do things the way we used to. We also give lots of options for very brief (seconds to a few minutes) of "mindful shifts" (also called informal mindfulness practices) in the course of the day.

3. Mindfulness exercises often require stillness and sustained focus, things that can be hard for people with attention difficulties. In your book, you describe ways to adapt mindfulness exercises to be more palatable to those with ADHD. Can you provide one or two quick examples?

We include more formal exercises that allow for movement, as well as additional opportunities to practice being present in the moment each day with a number of informal mindfulness practices. In combination with the briefer exercises as I mentioned above, this treatment approach is well-liked by many adults with ADHD who find it to fit well with the common struggles with restlessness and focus. Here is one example from the book:

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Brief **S.T.O.P.** Practice (5 minutes)

Sit comfortably and close your eyes.

*In this practice, the letter **S** reminds us to stop or pause. Let go of busy thinking or doing.*

*The letter **T** reminds us to take a few deeper breaths. Anchor your attention on the sensations of the breath coming in and going out.*

*Next, the letter **O** reminds us to observe in the present moment. See if you can open your awareness to notice anything else that is here: any sounds, body sensations, thoughts, feelings, needs. Observe the stream of experiences coming and going, noticing the shifts in your awareness and coming back to the breath as the anchor if you find yourself distracted or caught in thinking.*

*As we end the meditation, the letter **P** reminds us, we can proceed into the next moment now with more awareness.*