

3-S Group #4: Insight Meditation and Addiction

Materials Required

1. Meditative Video Segment, and the equipment required for playing the video
2. “Tardiness” door sign to be placed on the door at the end of the video: “Entrance to the group room is not be permitted once the video has finished. The video has finished. Please join us next week.”
3. Wall Posters prominently displayed – In large letters ...
 - a. Commitment: “Today I renew my commitment to my spiritual path.”
 - b. The Ten Spiritual Qualities (the Paramis) – the Spiritual Self’s Muscles: “generosity, morality, renunciation, wisdom, effort, tolerance, truth, strong determination, loving kindness, and equanimity”
4. Timer (for meditation and other timed exercises)
5. Pencils and notepaper for each participant.
6. Tape (to adhere poster paper to the walls, as needed)
7. Paper and easel board with marker for recorder
8. Vipassana Video ‘Changing from Inside’ (see Segment #8), VCR, TV

Therapeutic Goals

1. To provide a therapeutic context for a cognitive shift from habitual activation of the addict self-schema to increased activation of a spiritual self-schema that has as its focus doing no harm to self and others
2. To increase awareness of the automaticity of schematic processes, such as the addict self-schema.
3. To provide an opportunity for the creation of new cognitive scripts and behavioral action sequences that are consistent with the individual’s spiritual/religious faith.
This session provides the opportunity for ...
 - a. the practice of meditation on the in-and-out breath (to increase the ability to focus the attention and still the mind)
 - b. the practice of mindfulness while viewing a video describing Vipassana
 - c. learning about the application of Vipassana meditation in prisons.
 - d. learning about the application of meditation to recovery from addiction.

Begin Group

1. Video*

A commercially available meditation video of tranquil nature scenes is played to mark the beginning of each 3-S group session. The purpose of playing a meditative video at this time is to provide a buffer, or transition period, during which group members can begin to detach from their often chaotic lives, in readiness for the activation of their Spiritual selves through the practices of meditation and mindfulness. The video also provides a “tardiness window.” Out of respect for the group, punctuality is expected of group members. However, if group members are unavoidably detained, they will be permitted to enter the group room late only during the playing of the video. Once the video has finished, the group room door is closed, the tardiness sign is placed on the door

(see list of required group materials) and any late members will not be permitted to enter. They will, of course, be encouraged to return, on time, the following week. Repeated lateness should be discussed with the client during individual sessions.

Ron Clearfield, "Farewell," *Eversound Expressions*, Eversound (2002) (4.33 minutes)

***Note to therapist:**

Given that a 40 minute video will be played to the group during the 'new material' segment of this particular group session, the therapist may wish to forego the above video **if** all group members have arrived on time, making a 'tardiness window' unnecessary.

2. Welcome

At the end of the video the therapist places the "tardiness sign" on the outside of the group room door and welcomes all members to the 3-S group [Note: ground rules for the group, if any, (e.g., time management strategies used, policy regarding eating/drinking during group, etc.) may be reviewed at this time.]

Therapist script:

Welcome to Spirituality Group Therapy.

3. Introductions

Immediately following the welcome, the therapist asks group members to introduce themselves, by standing and saying their first names. [Note: as new group members may be added each week, it is important to have all group members introduce themselves every week.]

Therapist script:

Let's begin by introducing ourselves. One at a time, please stand and say your first name; then remain standing. [Therapist begins]. Hello, my name is

4. Commitment

Following the introductions, while group members are still standing, they are asked to renew their commitment to their Spiritual path by reading aloud the words on the Commitment Statement Poster ["Today I renew my commitment to my Spiritual path"] that is displayed prominently on the front of the group room (see list of required group materials). Group members are then seated.

Therapist script:

While we are still standing, let's renew our commitment to our Spiritual path by together reading the Commitment Statement aloud. [Therapist points to Commitment Poster]. All together ... Today I renew my commitment to my spiritual path.

5. Overview of 3-S development program philosophy: The therapist provides the following overview each week:

Therapist script:

Each of you are here today because you have made a commitment to abandon the addict self that has caused such suffering in your lives, and to develop instead your Spiritual self which will provide you with access to the peace and happiness of your true Spiritual nature. I know I don't have to tell you that although the addict self promises you relief from suffering, it is actually taking you on a path that leads to unending physical, emotional, and spiritual suffering. You all know that once it takes over – once it goes on automatic pilot – your welfare and the welfare of loved ones is of no importance to the addict self: it can easily convince you that absolutely nothing else matters except getting high. The goal of this program is to help you to see the addict self for what it is – a habit pattern of the mind that causes tremendous suffering. You will learn how to interrupt its habitual scripts – those “tapes” that play over and over in your head that urge you to use drugs just one more time, or to engage in other behaviors that can cause harm to you or others. These include sharing drug paraphernalia and having unsafe sex both of which can transmit HIV and other infections that can cause even greater suffering in your lives. In this program you will learn how to recognize the voice of the addict self and to stop it before it can harm you or others. You will do this by seeking refuge and strength in your true Spiritual nature. In this program, we view you as your Spiritual nature. That's the real you, not the addict self. Over the years of addiction, you may have come to doubt that you even have a Spiritual nature, or you may feel that it is now inaccessible to you. At this point, just have faith that it is still there; that it is always there. Your true Spiritual nature may be temporarily hidden from view, but trust that it is there. All you need is a way to access it – a path – that's your Spiritual path. However, in order to develop or strengthen this Spiritual path you will need a Spiritual self that has strong spiritual muscles – [therapist points to the parami poster – see list of required materials] – your Spiritual self's muscles are these 10 spiritual qualities that the addict self has tried to destroy. Together we will help you strengthen those spiritual muscles so that your Spiritual self stays strong and so that access to your Spiritual nature is available to you in every moment of every day. Just like strengthening physical muscles, strengthening your spiritual muscles takes training and practice. Each week we will practice meditation and do mindfulness exercises together that will help you to stay on your Spiritual path and access your Spiritual nature, but

you also need to practice between groups. To get the most out of these group sessions, you will need to make the effort to quiet your mind, to focus your attention, and to listen carefully to what I and the other group members are saying.

6. Agenda: The therapist provides group members with the agenda for the session. Providing an agenda aids in keeping the group focused and facilitates time management.

Therapist script:

Today we are going to begin as we always do by practicing meditation on the in and out breath. We will do this for five minutes. We will then watch a special video for about 40 minutes. We will end as we always do with a brief discussion about the contents of the video and our Spiritual stretch.

7. Meditation Practice*

Each group session provides an opportunity to practice meditation on the in- and out-breath (*anapanasati*). This brief 5-minute practice session is primarily for the purpose of reviewing the technique, for providing rationale for its use as a means by which the automaticity of the addict self is reduced and the spiritual self is accessed, and for encouraging daily practice. Group members are encouraged to practice daily for longer periods (e.g., 30-60 minutes daily).

***Note to therapist:** Due to the length of the video to be shown during this session, and with the goal of ending the group session on time, the therapist is advised to limit group meditation practice to 5 minutes only. With this in mind, the usual rationale provided by the therapist prior to leading the group meditation practice and the feedback/debriefing following the meditation practice is to be omitted for this session only.

Meditation Instructions:

Therapist script:

When you practice meditation at home, you will need to choose a quiet place where you will not be disturbed. If you wish you may sit crossed legged on a cushion on the floor, you may kneel, or you may sit in a chair with your back straight. You should feel comfortable, but not so comfortable that you fall asleep. While meditating, it is important to remain alert.

Let's do this now:

[In a slow, calm voice, the therapist narrates the first 1-2 minutes of the 5 minute practice]

- *Remain seated in your chairs. Sit with your back straight, feet flat against the floor, hands on your lap.*

- *Now close your eyes* [Therapist checks that client is comfortable doing this in session. Clients who are uncomfortable closing their eyes are instructed to close their eyes half-way and to focus on an object within their vision. As clients' comfort levels increase over the course of treatment, clients are encouraged to close their eyes more and more, and to do their daily at-home practice with their eyes closed.]
- *Just breathe normally through your nose.*
- *As you continue breathing normally through your nose, begin to focus your attention on the sensations in and around your nostrils, and on your upper lip just below your nostrils, that are caused by the breath passing in and out. You may feel a slight tickle, or a feeling of warmth or coolness, or heaviness or lightness.*
- *Just keep your concentration fixed there – **this area is your anchor** – the place you will always return to -- observe the changing sensations you experience in that area as the breath passes over your 'anchor.'*
- *At the beginning of every breath, commit yourself to noticing everything you can about the sensations caused by just that one breath. Then do the same for the next breath -- committing yourself to your practice, just one breath at a time.*
- *If thoughts arise, gently, but firmly, bring your awareness back to your anchor, and again commit yourself to remaining focused on the in and out breath, one breath at a time.*
- *...Pause briefly (e.g., 5 seconds) to give group members opportunity to experience the breath...*
- *Again, focus all your attention on the changing sensations around your nose and upper lip that are caused by the breath as it goes in and out. Notice whether the breath is long or short? Does the air pass through one or both nostrils? Is the air cool or warm?*
- *If your mind wanders again, just note 'mind wandered away', and immediately return it to your anchor. No need to get discouraged, it is the mind's nature to wander, and your job to train it, so just keep bringing it back. Gently, but firmly bring it back. Just as you would train a young child not to stray away from home, you patiently train your mind to stay close to its Spiritual home.*
- *If you are having difficulty bringing your mind back, you can try counting your breaths, just up to 10, but don't get caught up in counting. The goal is to stay focused on your 'anchor' not on numbers.*

We'll continue meditating on the in- and out-breath in silence for another 4 minutes. I will let you know when the time is up.

At end of 4 minutes, therapist asks client to open their eyes.

8. Presentation of new material with experiential exercise:

New material is provided experientially each week for the purpose of helping group members to increase mindfulness and to practice activation of the Spiritual self-schema. The therapist uses a technique that requires group members to attend carefully to the instructions as they are being provided. Instructions for all exercises are provided slowly and clearly, just once. After the instructions are given, group members are permitted one question in the event further clarification is necessary. If a group member still does not understand the instructions, he or she may ask another group member to repeat the instructions aloud to the entire group. This technique fosters mindfulness and group cohesion and cooperation.

New material: The application of Vipassana (“Insight”) meditation to addiction:

**Videotape: Changing from Inside
David Donnenfield Productions, 1998**

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The new material to be provided in this group session is delivered to the group using a video describing a course of Vipassana meditation, as taught by students of S.N. Goenka in the tradition of Sayagyi U Ba Khin, that is currently being provided to prisoners in jails and prisons in the various parts of the world. The video – ‘Changing from Inside’ – is a documentary that describes a 10-day course being taught in a minimum security prison in Seattle, Washington. It is shown in 3-S group therapy for the purpose of strengthening group members’ motivation for daily meditation practice, for providing further rationale for the use of meditation in the treatment of addiction, and for emphasizing the universal applicability of meditation practice to people of all faiths.

Therapist script:

We talk a lot about the importance of daily meditation practice. We do this for a number of reasons. Meditation on sensations caused by the in and out breath increases your concentration and mindfulness. It quiets and focuses the mind. It also helps you to become more aware of the wandering monkey mind. You begin to see how important it is to tame the wandering monkey mind so that the addict self does not use it to lead you away from your Spiritual path. These meditation sessions are an important component of this therapy, and, as with most things, the more informed you are about it, the more likely you are to understand the reasons for doing it and to actually do it yourself in your daily life.

This meditation technique, with its instructions to focus on sensations caused by the breath, is the first step of an ancient meditation practice, called “Vipassana”. Vipassana means “insight” – or to know things as they really are, rather than as they appear to be. Currently, this technique is being used in countries throughout the world to help individuals understand their true nature and to live happy, peaceful, moral lives. Today I am going to play a videotape for you that documents a 10-day Vipassana program provided to prisoners and staff in a minimum security prison in Seattle, Washington. Although the program shown on the videotape is much more intensive than our program here, it will give you a good idea of how people faced with a range of difficulties in their lives, including addiction, have used and benefited from meditation. I encourage you to watch the video mindfully – make the commitment to remain alert, and to watch and listen carefully. I think that this is a very moving documentary, and I hope you will find it as interesting and engaging as I do.

Therapist starts video. At the conclusion of the video, therapist begins the Q&A period.

9. Questions and Answer Period:

Following the experiential presentation of new material, the therapist poses questions for group discussion in order to determine how well group members have understood the relevance of the new material to their daily lives, specifically, to the prevention of harm to self and others, and whether group members can identify the spiritual qualities that they demonstrated during the session.

Therapist script:

- A. How can what you learned today help you remain abstinent during the coming week?*
- B. How can what you learned today prevent the transmission of infections such as HIV?*
- C. Which spiritual muscles did you exercise today? [Therapist points to the poster].*

10. Summary:

Therapist provides a brief review of the entire session. Group members wanting more information about Vipassana can be referred to the Vipassana website: www.dhamma.org, and/or to the book: ‘The Art of Living. Vipassana Meditation as taught by S.N. Goenka’ by William Hart. San Francisco: HarperCollins. (1987). Available through Pariyatti Book Service at www.pariyatti.com.

Therapist script:

Today,

- *We practiced meditation on the in- and out-breath and mindfulness in order to begin taking back control from the addict self and to strengthen the spiritual self.*
- *We learned that this takes strong Spiritual muscles and that a rigorous training program with daily practice is needed to keep them strong.*
- *We learned about a special meditation program, called Vipassana, that is provided in many parts of the world.*
- *We learned that meditation practice can help change the lives of individuals, including those individuals who are struggling with addiction.*
- *We learned that meditation practice helps individuals of all faiths stay on their Spiritual path.*

In a few minutes the group will be over. Until we meet again next week, keep reminding yourself of your true nature. Once you are back into the routine of daily life, it can be easy to lose sight of who you really are. Just remember, you are not your addict self – the addict self is that habit pattern of mind that lies to you over and over again promising you relief from your suffering when in fact it just causes more and more suffering. Don't forget that. Remind yourself of your Spiritual nature and its capacity for love and compassion, and enact it in your daily life. I know you can do it. Just keep practicing your meditation daily and try to be more mindful in everything that you do. When you practice, you are strengthening your spiritual muscles and making your Spiritual self stronger and your addict self weaker. Each step you take on your Spiritual path, no matter how small, takes you closer to your goal. You have taken several steps today. Well done. Let's end as we always do with our Spiritual stretch.

11. The Spiritual Stretch.

The Spiritual Stretch is shown in the Appendix. Its purpose is for group members to renew their commitment to staying on their Spiritual path throughout the day in their thoughts, words, deeds, and perceptions, and to be open to the experience and expression of their Spiritual nature in all their daily activities. Group members stand and, in while in various postures, recite the following the affirmations

Therapist script:

Please stand, and repeat after me:

1. *Today I take my Spiritual path (hands raised above the head, palms together).*
2. *May my thoughts reflect my Spiritual nature (hands in front of forehead, palms together);*
3. *May my words reflect my Spiritual nature (hands in front of mouth, palms together);*
4. *May my emotions reflect my Spiritual nature (hands in front of chest/heart, palms together);*
5. *May my actions reflect my Spiritual nature (hands in front of abdomen, palms together);*
6. *May my perceptions reflect my Spiritual nature (hands outstretched to side, fingers pointing towards the ground);*
7. *May I be open and receptive to my Spiritual nature (hands outstretched to side, fingers pointing towards the sky);*
8. *I am my Spiritual nature (back to starting position with hands raised above the head, palms together).*

12. End.

Therapist script:

It was good to see you all today. See you next week.