

Applied Positive Psychology

Professor Dilwar Hussain

Department of Humanities and Social Sciences

Indian Institute of Technology, Guwahati

Week 4

Lecture 12: Interventions for Cultivating Mindfulness and Flow

I welcome you all to module four of the course titled Applied Positive Psychology. This module is about mindfulness and flow. This is the third lecture of this module, and overall lecture number twelve. So, today's lecture is titled "Interventions for Cultivating Mindfulness and Flow." The earlier lectures were dedicated to mindfulness and flow. In today's lecture, we will combine both and see the relationship between them, focusing mostly on some of the interventions that are available for both mindfulness and flow.

So, before we talk about today's lecture, let me give you a brief recap of the last lecture. The last lecture was about the concept of flow, where we tried to discuss and define the concept of flow and the various conditions associated with it. We discussed some of the models available to explain flow. We also discussed various conditions for flow to occur, and the nine dimensions or characteristics of flow. We also discussed different activities that are conducive to flow and those that are not, and at the end, we discussed the possible consequences or impact of flow on our mind and functioning aspects. We also talked about the possible dangers of the flow state. So, these are the things that we discussed in the last lecture.

In today's lecture, we will be focusing on extending the earlier lecture on flow. We will start the lecture with some of the possible interventions for facilitating flow in our life. Then we will also discuss the relationship between flow state and mindfulness that we discussed in the first lecture of this module, and we will see how they are connected to

each other. And at the end, we will be discussing some mindfulness-based therapeutic interventions that are available. So let us start.

Let us see some of the possible interventions for flow to happen, which are available individually or collectively. The flow principles have been applied to a variety of contexts. In general, two types of intervention approaches can be found or applied. One is interventions that address or aim at shaping activity, structures, and environment so that they foster flow or obstruct it less. One way to foster flow is to shape the environment or the activities you engage in so that they facilitate a flow state. We can change the environment a little bit so that flow can take place more, or the design of the activity that we are doing can be changed a little bit so that it facilitates a flow state more. So this is one way of intervention that is available. Another way is to assist individuals in finding flow. Another strategy is that you do not focus much on the environment but rather on the individual himself or herself, which helps them find a flow state by understanding and clarifying what conditions are necessary and what kind of activities he or she can do. Basically, helping individuals find their flow state.

So, most of the interventions are either in the first category or the second category. Both can be helpful or a combination of both can be done. Now, just to give an example, one of the best applications of flow principles is discussed in the literature, which took place in Key School—this is the name of a school called Key School in Indianapolis, USA—where the goal was to foster flow by influencing both the environment and the individual. So, this school tried to conduct an experiment where they used both changes in the environment and assisted students in finding a flow state. What they did is that the school tried to create a learning environment that fosters flow experience. They modified the whole structure of the environment in the school itself so that flow could happen more easily. Second, they help students form interests and develop the capacity to experience flow. They were given tasks (the kind of activities that they were doing), they were changed or shaped in such a way that students would find flow more in those activities. So, they manipulated both the environment as well as assisted individuals in finding a flow state. So, the school had a dedicated center for promoting flow among the students called “Flow Activity Center”. What kind of things did they do? The students

were given regular opportunities to actively choose and engage in activities of their own interest, and then pursue those activities without demands or distractions, creating what has been described as a serious play-like situation. These are play-like activities, but there is a seriousness involved in them. Therefore, they created this flow activity center where the whole aim is to facilitate a flow state. What they did was provide more opportunities to the students in their center to actively choose activities that are more interesting to them and pursue those activities where there are even minimum external demands and distraction so that they can choose things that they like and pursue them accordingly in a situation that they call serious play-like situations. So there is some structure to it, but there is also a sense of choice and freedom involved in it. To support students' capacity to develop the experience of flow, some environmental aspects were changed. To assist students in developing the capacity for a flow state, the teachers encouraged them to challenge and stress themselves. Teachers also provided new challenges for the children to foster growth. They manipulated the situation to create a more flow-like environment in the activities where the teachers encouraged students to find challenging tasks. They are given more challenging tasks where they need to push themselves. There is a requirement for challenge and skill conditions for flow to happen. Teachers also provided new challenges to the children to foster growth, and so on. The school tried to make certain changes in the types of tasks that are given in the environment, and the teachers themselves provided that kind of activities that help students experience more flow states, and so on. These are some examples of what that school tried to do in terms of creating a whole center for flow and facilitating flow among the students. This is a very good example where they both manipulated the environment and assisted students to experience a flow state.

Similarly, the principles of flow research have been applied in other settings, such as organizations related to police, automobile factories, art museums, and psychotherapies assisting individuals in finding flow. The whole environmental context was made in such a way that flow could happen more. Psychotherapies attempted to facilitate the flow state by assisting individuals in finding flow states through helping them engage in the right kind of activities and so on. So, all the research has been done in all these contexts.

Now, for facilitating flow, we have already discussed the various dimensions and factors that facilitate the flow state. For the individual level, if you want to facilitate a flow state, we can just summarize some of the things that will help us find more flow in our lives. Some of the factors we have already discussed, but we will be discussing these factors and some other new factors more in the context of applying them. So, one thing we already discussed is the balance of challenge and skill. That is the central part. You cannot avoid this aspect while discussing flow state. This central factor for the flow state is the presence of challenging activity that is appropriately balanced with individual skill level. This flow state is facilitated when individuals perceive their skills to be in alignment with the challenge at hand. Individuals' perception of this balance is crucial. So, this is very important. How do you perceive this challenge? Your perception is very important rather than what it is as it determines whether the activity leads to flow or anxiety. Anxiety occurs when challenges exceed the abilities. This is very important for the flow experience; whether you do it for yourself or try to implement it in any context or situation, this factor has to be taken into account. If you want to experience more flow state, do more activities that are more challenging and match your skills as well and if you want to do it in other contexts as well, try to design activities in such a way that they match the balance of skills and challenge conditions.

Research also shows that a positive mental attitude is obviously very important in terms of experiencing a flow state. For example, Jackson in 1992 found that athletes, such as US national champion figure skaters, were more likely to achieve flow when they maintained a positive mental attitude. A positive mindset helps enhance focus and performance, promoting the flow state. So even in sports-like situations, people may not experience a flow state if they, let's say, feel too much anxiety and stress, and so on. The positive mental attitude, along with a sense of challenge and approaching it with the necessary positive mindset, is very much necessary for the flow state to happen. If you experience too much stress and anxiety, it will obviously be detrimental to the flow state. Research shows that this mental attitude is also very important for flow to happen.

Positive emotion is obviously very important. For example, Jackson's studies that we talked about earlier. It was reported that experiencing positive emotions before and during competition was beneficial for entering flow. Positive emotional states facilitate the concentration and enjoyment required for the flow. Because one of the major conditions for flow to happen is that you are interested in the task, there are positive emotions in it. If you experience too much stress and anxiety, you will not be able to experience a flow state. This positive emotional state, if it is stimulated before the event or during the event by support from supporters among the people, for example in the context of sports, will help people or sportsmen, or in any other condition, to enter into a flow state much more easily. It will facilitate concentration and enjoyment by promoting positive emotions. So, while doing a task or during the task there are conditions that provide you with more positive emotions, like having a lot of supporters around you, this is more likely to lead to the experience of a flow state. Obviously, the appropriate focus is the next factor, and maintaining focus is another crucial factor for flow. Jackson's study also identified that skaters' ability to stay focused free from distraction was essential to achieving flow during performance. This is obviously the central aspect. If you are not able to focus, you cannot succeed in any task, whether it is sports or anything else, and success will never happen. So, the necessary focus is obviously important. We have already discussed the importance of intrinsic motivation. If you are not intrinsically motivated in a task, you are doing it simply because there is pressure to do it or because of something you will get out of it. If that mindset is present, flow is less likely to happen.

The research by Jackson et al. (1998) and Kowal and Fortier (1999) highlighted that self-determined intrinsic motivation is strongly linked to flow. Athletes who engage in an activity for intrinsic reasons, such as personal enjoyment, are more likely to experience flow compared to those who are driven by extrinsic rewards. Research has been very clear on this. If you are more intrinsically interested in a task, you are more likely to experience a flow state compared to someone who is doing this task for external motivation. So, to enhance the flow state, the more you engage in intrinsically motivated tasks, the greater the chances of experiencing flow state.

Another factor that research shows is related to planning and preparation. Jackson (1995) and Jackson et al. (1998) study found that athletes who engaged in thorough planning and preparation were more likely to experience a flow state. The more you prepare beforehand, it will help you to be much more in control of the task, which is very important for one of the characteristics of the flow state to happen. If while doing the task you do not know where to go, what to do, and so on, in this confused state, a flow state is not likely to happen. So, planning and preparation are also very important.

These factors ensure that individuals feel ready to meet the challenges presented by the activity. If you are mentally prepared beforehand, you can actively do whatever is required in the situation to create a flow state. Research by Grove and Lewis (1996) and Pates and Maynard (2000) suggested that flow can be enhanced by the ability to control one's actions, which may be improved through techniques such as hypnosis or psychological skills training. This method helps athletes manage their focus and control over performance, promoting flow. Control over action could be a very psychological thing for some people; even though they may be very good at tasks in terms of skills, they still feel that they will not be able to perform or may fail. A lot of self-doubt and lack of confidence can exist even though you may actually have a lot of skills. Still, you will not be able to enter a flow state in your best performance state simply because of your self-doubt and lack of confidence. In such conditions, things like hypnosis or psychological skill training can be very beneficial in terms of experiencing flow state, promoting flow state, or enhancing performance.

Research by Koehn et al. (2006) and Koehn (2007) showed that interventions involving imagery and relaxation techniques help athletes increase confidence, maintain focus, and control their actions, all of which contributed to the flow during the performance. These skills are seen as essential for mastering tasks and entering a flow. All kinds of psychological training, like relaxation training, which can manage your anxiety and stress and your sense of control, can facilitate the flow state because they prepare you mentally to enter into it. Mental focus and the right kind of positive mindset are also very

important for the flow state to happen. Many times, even though you may have skills, you may still not be able to enter flow states because of all the other psychological hindrances, which can be decreased or lessened by psychological techniques like relaxation techniques and other interventions.

Some researchers also suggested that setting personal goals that are attainable, challenging, and well-defined can promote a sense of control and persistence in mastering the task. This persistence, in turn, supports the development of the skills necessary for the flow to happen. What kind of goal you set for yourself is also very important. If you set a goal that is attainable, you can attain it. If you set a goal that is unattainable and impossible to achieve, you will get frustrated and will not enter a flow state while pursuing those goals. So, goals that are attainable but necessary also involve a challenge. Goals which are very well defined, not abstract, can promote a sense of control, a sense of persistence, and the promotion of a flow state.

So, this was briefly about some of the interventional aspects of flow, focusing on the factors we can consider promoting a flow state. Now this lecture is also about finding the relationship between flow and mindfulness.

We have already discussed some of the factors that can lead to or facilitate a flow state. Now another important thing that can be very strongly connected to flow state is mindfulness. When we talk about flow and mindfulness, there are certain differences we have already discussed individually. In a flow state, it is a complete immersion in the activity where there is a focus, there is a high challenge and high skill situation. Mindfulness is the practice of paying attention to the present moment on purpose and without judgment. So, mindfulness is more about paying broad attention in the present moment, may not be one very specific thing, but it might help you bring your attention to the present moment. Flow is very task-oriented; you get immersed in the task. Both are present-oriented things, but the breadth of the focus is different. In flow, there is a deep singular focus on a specific task, often leading to a loss of self-consciousness. Mindfulness is a very open, broad awareness of the present moment. Whatever comes in

the present moment, you just observe it. On the other hand, flow state is very focused on a specific task.

The flow state is a highly rewarding experience characterized by effortless concentration and optimal performance. Mindfulness is non-judgmental awareness of whatever arises, without striving for any particular outcome. The outcome is not the focus of mindfulness. Flow, by definition, is a highly functional and very positive outcome-oriented state. Goal orientation often involves clear objectives and challenges. So, there is a very specific goal orientation in the flow state with a very clear objective and challenges. In mindfulness, this non-goal-oriented focus is on awareness rather than achieving specific results. Mindfulness is more than just coming to the present moment. Goal orientation is not much in focus. Temporal focus; if you see, there is an intense focus on the present moment in the flow state, often with an altered perception of time. In the case of mindfulness, there is awareness of time as it unfolds without any distortion or attachment to it.

So if you see all these differences, they primarily talk about flow being a more intense, focused state. Mindfulness is a broad, present-oriented attention that may not be specifically focused on one thing. In a flow state, there is a sense of control and mastery. Mindfulness is more of an acceptance of whatever happens. In terms of performance, flow is more performance-oriented with peak performance and optimal achievement. Mindfulness is more well-being oriented. It has more impact on emotional well-being, regulation, and so on. It is not performance-oriented, which can have a positive impact on performance. But it is mostly regarded as having a positive impact on our emotional well-being and so on.

The flow state is again a very temporary state. We can be in that state for some time. It can fluctuate based on the challenge of the task and the skill required. Mindfulness can be a very long-term practice. Obviously, when you do it, it can be short term, but then you have to consistently practice it, cultivate it through meditation, and apply it in daily life. Flow is commonly linked to high-level performance in activities like sports and music. Mindfulness is often linked to stress reduction, emotional regulation, and so on. The

relationship in case of flow can be facilitated by mindfulness, but they are distinct states. Mindfulness can help create the conditions for flow by improving focus and present-moment awareness. So, the idea is that we can facilitate flow state through the practice of mindfulness.

Lot of research shows that if you can maintain a mindful state, it will facilitate the flow state in a much better way. Because flow state also requires you to focus on the present moment, and mindfulness prepares your mind to be in the present moment, which is the foundation for flow to happen. So in that sense, both are strongly connected to each other, and particularly, mindfulness can facilitate the flow state. Let us see more about this aspect. This present moment awareness is essential for experiencing flow state. Flow is characterized by immersion in the task where the individual is absorbed by the experience of it. Present moment awareness is a common thing in both flow state and mindfulness. The deep focus and awareness can be cultivated through mindfulness. The necessary condition for present moment awareness can be cultivated by mindfulness because the focus of mindfulness is developing this awareness only. The growing popularity of mindfulness-based approaches in psychology reflects the widespread recognition and benefits of fully being in the present moment. So that foundational requirement of flow state can be systematically developed using mindfulness. This present moment awareness is also a key component of flow state as well as mindfulness, making these two constructs interrelated.

This is where the relationship is. Otherwise, they are very different constructs. Their relationship is based on this concept of present moment awareness. Both have this aspect. Flow, which is often associated with high-level performance in various contexts, can be a natural outcome of mindfulness in challenging situations.

Flow state can be very naturally built through the practice of mindfulness. Interestingly, sports psychologists have been teaching athletes about mindfulness without using this term explicitly for many years, helping them enhance focus and performance.

Cultivating present moment awareness enhances the quality of one's experience and can lead to performance outcomes that surpass previous levels of achievement. This moment awareness, which can be cultivated by mindfulness, can also enhance performance levels. When a performer is fully engaged and focused on the task, which is part of the flow experience, their performance tends to improve, and this deep concentration may facilitate the experience of flow. These are different ways of saying how they are connected. Mindfulness training is an effective way to develop present-moment awareness, and there are various approaches to teaching mindfulness.

We have already discussed mindfulness earlier, and we have seen that there are different ways to develop this present moment awareness. Flow, as we have seen, is an optimal state because it involves complete focus on the present moment, where nothing disrupts concentration. In flow, both external and internal distractions are absent, allowing for full immersion in the activity. This state of present moment awareness aligns with the goals of mindfulness suggesting that helping individuals become more mindful can create the conditions for experiencing flow. Creating a mindful state may create the right conditions for flow to be experienced much more easily and improving our performance, focus, attention, and so on. Let us see some empirical evidence in this direction. Several studies provide empirical support for the idea that mindfulness can enhance the flow state. For example, Kee and Wang (2008) found a correlation between individual tendencies to be mindful and their self-reported flow experiences in college athletes. They found that there was a positive correlation. Individuals who are more likely to be mindful tend to have a higher tendency for mindfulness and also report more flow experiences in the athletic context. Other research, like Aherne, Moran, and Lonsdale (2011) assessed the impact of mindfulness training on college athletes and found that a group who received mindfulness training showed increased flow scores in dimensions such as clear goals and a sense of control, as measured by the flow state scale.

Some research also shows that there is a positive impact of mindfulness training, especially among athletes, and that this practice has led to a higher experience of flow state in athletic situations. Another study also found an association between mindfulness

and flow in elite athletes as measured by the Dispositional Flow Scale. So research also shows that mindfulness and flow are positively connected to each other among athletes. There are diverse researches that reports in the same direction which shows that mindfulness can promote a flow state.

Kaufman and colleagues also found in a four-week intervention study with athletes where they developed a mindful sports performance enhancement program teaching about mindfulness, which extended the mindfulness-based stress reduction program and mindfulness-based cognitive therapy. These are different intervention programs based on mindfulness that were taught to athletes. In a four-week program, Kaufman and colleagues found improvement in the flow score measured by the Flow State Scale during the course of the program. In this focused intervention program, they found that the mindfulness-based program enhanced their flow state in the athletic context. Other research also created high and low flow groups based on responses to the flow scale. And they found that the high-flow group had higher mindfulness scores. Students, athletes, or the group of participants who scored higher in flow reported a higher score in mindfulness as well suggesting that athletes with a greater propensity for flow also have a greater disposition for mindfulness.

Both ways the results were found. Higher mindfulness states lead to higher flow states, and research also found that people with higher flow states have higher mindfulness scores in that regard. So this led to the conclusion that the propensity to achieve a flow state may be enhanced by increasing mindfulness. This is something that has been shown again and again by research evidence: your ability to experience a flow state will enhance through the practice of mindfulness. The directionality problem between flow and mindfulness remains an area for further research, but Key and Wang suggest that the relationship is more symbiotic, with each promoting the other.

So both are strongly interconnected with each other. Given the elusive nature of flow, developing mindfulness skills as a pathway to flow experience makes more sense in terms of an applied perspective. Since flow is more of an elusive state, you cannot

directly intervene for flow, as it is not very structured. It may require a lot of things. In that context, from an applied perspective, developing mindfulness for promoting flow is a better approach because research has shown it can promote a flow state. Because intervention for mindfulness is much clearer, more focused, and can be done more easily compared to flow state, which may require many factors in the environment and so on.

Now let us look at some of the mindfulness-based therapeutic interventions that are available because this particular lecture is focused on some of the applied interventional aspects as well. Let us look at some of the applied interventions available in mindfulness-based practices, particularly in the therapy interventions, is important because mindfulness is mostly used in the therapeutic aspect as well.

So mindfulness-based therapies incorporate mindfulness principles to help individuals develop this awareness which is present-moment awareness. Now these therapies can include formal practices like meditating quietly for extended periods as well as informal exercises such as applying mindfulness to daily routines and so on. There are a variety of things that can be done based on different approaches. The popularity of mindfulness is rapidly growing, the number of studies investigating the benefits of mindfulness-based therapies for people suffering from psychological problems is also increasing. Since there are a lot of therapies that include mindfulness-based therapies primarily because research shows their impact is very strong, in terms of treating psychological problems and disorders, especially those of a moderate or mild nature, or for generally enhancing well-being. We will be talking about some of these interventions or therapies that are available and you can see a lot of research has been done in almost all varieties of psychological disorder contexts. Some of these findings are listed here. Mindfulness-based therapies effectively reduced all these psychological disorder issues. In the context of attention deficit disorders, mindfulness can strongly act as an intervention primarily because it directly addresses the attention problem. Even in psychosis, some serious psychological disorders in which there is a disconnection from reality, mindfulness has been found to be important or at least it facilitates or promotes recovery and so on. Mindfulness for eating disorders has also been used as a therapy, particularly those who cannot regulate their

eating, and some people who do not even eat too little. Mindfulness has really been found to be very effective simply because you become more connected with your body and mind; you see them from a distance and can objectively assess what is right and wrong. In bipolar disorders, mindfulness has also been used and found to be beneficial. Bipolar disorders are those disorders where there is a cycle of depression and mania. A person goes into depression for some time, and then there is a cycle of mania where the person becomes overly happy at an abnormal level. And then again goes into depression, and again goes into mania. So, this cycle goes on and on. In those cases, mindfulness has also been found to be effective in terms of at least addressing some of the aspects of the disorder.

Depression can also be treated with mindfulness-based therapies. Chronic pain management and mindfulness can also be helpful. Anxiety disorders have also been shown to benefit people using mindfulness-based therapies. Addiction is another area where mindfulness is very helpful. Unless you really go deeper into your mind and the structure of your mind, you won't see the pattern that you develop of moving towards something. Then there are trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder; mindfulness has been found to be beneficial in some cases. So, if you see, overall it included almost all varieties of disorders; mindfulness can be effective in terms of addressing most of these disorders. Obviously, they made some more specific customized aspects of looking into them. Some disorders may also require medication, and so on. But mindfulness can help in certain aspects of these disorders in terms of treatment. Now, if you look at some of the therapies where mindfulness is directly integrated, there are various mindfulness-based therapies available. I will just highlight these three therapies, which are very strongly based on mindfulness-based aspects. One is called the mindfulness-based stress reduction program, which we discussed a little bit in the first lecture of this module. John Kabat-Zinn, who introduced mindfulness in academia, developed a mindfulness-based stress reduction program that is highly successful. Then there is mindfulness-based cognitive therapy. Mindfulness was also integrated into the existing cognitive therapies, and it became mindfulness-based cognitive therapy. There is something called acceptance and commitment therapy, which is also called ACT therapy. There, mindfulness is also

very strongly integrated. So let me briefly talk about each of them.

The first is mindfulness-based stress reduction program, which is commonly referred to as MBSR. This mindfulness-based stress reduction program was first a therapeutic program that integrated mindfulness into clinical practice. It is one of the first therapy or intervention programs where mindfulness was integrated into clinical practice. It was originally designed to support patients with chronic pain in medical settings. It was developed by Jon Kabat-Zinn in the early '80s. MBSR consists of eight-week group sessions, each lasting 2 to 3 hours, typically with around 30 participants. Individually, it can also be done, but mostly these are done in a lot of western hospitals where a group of people comes together and then these programs are implemented on them. Each session can last from 2.5 to 3 hours. Additionally, participants are expected to complete daily home practice, which may include things like meditation and yoga for 45 minutes, 6 days a week throughout the treatment process. So it is a very extensive program where a lot of involvement and commitment are required for such programs to benefit from it. MBSR often begins with the body scan exercise. We discussed a little bit of it in the first lecture where we discussed the practice of mindfulness. So how are body scans done? participants are guided to observe sensations throughout their bodies from toes to head without judgment or effort to alter the sensations for about 40 to 45 minutes.

A body scan meditation exercise helps the participants learn to connect with their bodies. Through the sensations, which may include focusing on breathing and getting connected to the sensations in the body, which could also be very strongly linked to emotions. They are taught how to observe them without identifying with them or getting influenced by them. Following this mindful yoga is practiced which is a gentle practice designed to cultivate awareness and relaxation. Other practices related to increasing awareness and relaxation techniques are also taught to them.

Many people find that mindful yoga helps them to relax more easily while staying present. So that is another aspect of this program. Another key element of this MBSR is sitting meditation, where participants focus on their breath and gradually expand their

attention to other aspects like sound, emotions, and thoughts. Some of the practices we discussed in the first lecture of this module involved how mindfulness can be practiced. Breathing exercises is not about changing breathing but focusing on the breath.

They also expand our attention to sounds, emotions, thoughts, and so on. Walking meditation, which we have also already discussed, similar to other mindfulness practices, encourages participants to notice bodily sensations associated with walking and so on. These are also included in the program, and the diverse practices are included. The final core practice in MBSR is loving-kindness meditation, in which participants intentionally direct feelings of kindness and compassion toward various beings. So, this meditation is seen as central to many adaptations of MBSR programs for diverse applications. You just manifest goodwill and a good intention for other people and so on. This state also has a lot of healing impacts. Additionally, MBSR promotes informal mindfulness practices in everyday life. Once you learn this structured program, they also teach you to include it in your everyday life, encouraging participants to incorporate brief mini meditations during daily activities such as waiting in line or sitting in traffic, helping integrate mindfulness beyond formal sessions and integrate it more into daily activities. These are some of the aspects of the MBSR, or Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction program, which is a very structured program that teaches people and patients to develop mindfulness and treat various psychological disorders and issues.

The next program is called MBCT, which means Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy. This was developed by CBT experts John Teasdale, Mark Williams, and Zindel Segal in response to challenges they faced in preventing depression relapse. The cognitive behavioral therapy focuses on changing thought processes. If you look at depressed patients, their problem is that how they think about themselves, and the world is very pessimistic manner. So that leads to the symptoms of depression. Thought processes are quite faulty. Cognitive behavior therapy, which focuses solely on changing thoughts, has been found to shift thought processes, but individuals often relapse very quickly. They became depressed again. So, they integrated mindfulness into their therapy itself to address this relapse problem.

Many individuals who have recovered from depression experienced a high risk of relapse. They become depressed after the treatment. Using cognitive behavior therapy, which was given alone, was not sufficiently addressing the depressed patients. So, since they became familiar with the success of the mindfulness-based stress reduction program that we discussed just now, they decided to combine some of its principles with their therapy, which is cognitive behavior therapy, and that became MBCT, (Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy).

Now, a key distinction between normal cognitive behavioral therapy, where there is no mindfulness, and mindfulness-based cognitive therapy lies in their approaches to cognitive change and how they focus on change. So cognitive behavioral therapy, where there is no mindfulness, emphasizes the main things that cognition influences behavior. Cognition broadly means your thought processes, belief systems, and so on. They are main reasons for your behavior. Cognition can be identified and altered. We can identify the faulty thought processes and change them. Behavioral changes occur through cognitive change. We can change our cognitions, thought processes, or belief system. And this change will lead to change in our behavior. They focus only on changing thought processes because thoughts are major reasons behind your behavior and emotions. If you change your thoughts, your emotions will also improve, and your behavior will also improve. So, that is the main idea in cognitive behavior therapy. However, in mindfulness-based cognitive therapy, which is a modified form of cognitive behavioral therapy, it encourages clients to observe thoughts non-judgmentally rather than replacing them. Because they integrated a mindfulness program here, and mindfulness never focuses on changing thoughts. Because if you change your thoughts, then thoughts may change in some other forms. Mindfulness simply says, don't even try to replace it, just observe them nonjudgmentally. By nature, thoughts are very short-term. They will come and go. You don't have to change them or do anything. By doing this, you will only reduce the influence of thoughts. The whole impact of thought will be diminished. The goal is for clients to develop a healthier relationship with their thoughts rather than changing their thoughts, viewing them without attachment.

Attachment is the problem where you remove the whole relationship with the thought. You don't become attached to thoughts. Rather, you create a detached observational stance, and then the thought will not really have an impact on you. That is the difference between normal cognitive therapy, where they try to replace thoughts, and mindfulness-based cognitive therapy, where they don't try to replace thoughts but rather change the relationship with the thoughts in the sense that you just observe them without judging them.

MBCT, Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy, consists of eight-week sessions, which are more structured than when you go to a therapy session. Each last for 2 hours with about 12 participants (smaller participant groups). It draws from the MBSR practice, which we discussed earlier: the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Program, with the exception of Loving Kindness Meditation, which was included in the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Program, they do not include it.

The one unique mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT) technique is the three-minute breathing space, which involves three steps. One focuses on internal experiences by asking, "What is my experience right now?" To observe present sensations without judgment. Second, concentrate on the sensations of breathing. So when you focus on breathing, just focus on the sensations of it. Third, broadening this awareness to encompass the entire body while maintaining a non-judgmental perspective. You start with the sensations in the body, then breathing, and then you extend it to the entire body while maintaining a non-judgmental perspective. So this is like a three-minute breathing space exercise that is focused on these aspects. Clients are encouraged to practice this technique daily, especially when feeling overwhelmed, and so on. So, this is how mindfulness-based techniques were included in formal cognitive behavioral therapy, and they found it was much more effective in a lot of contexts.

The third one is called acceptance and commitment therapy, where there is also an aspect of mindfulness included. This ACT therapy, or acceptance and commitment therapy, differs from the earlier two that we discussed: the mindfulness-based stress reduction

program and mindfulness-based cognitive therapy. It originates from the behavioral approach and relational frame theory, which emphasize the link between psychology and language. So here they also include many other things, which were not included in the earlier two types of therapies. They also include language and how you talk about things because language is connected to your thought processes.

ACT integrates mindfulness and acceptance to help individuals shift their focus from specific thoughts and feelings to behaviors that align with personal values. The goal of ACT is to develop psychological flexibility. You become much more flexible in your psychological approach so that it is not so rigid and one-dimensional. You have more perspective to look at, and for that, they use mindfulness. The flexibility is about the ability to stay present and make mindful choices to either change or persist in behavior based on one's values by learning and accepting current experiences. This is the central idea in ACT, and flexibility is about what happens when you are able to be mindful, and in this mindful state, you can make choices whether to change your behavior or not, or to change your behavior according to your values or not. You have more freedom when you are mindful to change your perspectives and behaviors and take actions that are more aligned with your values.

So all these things can be developed using a mindfulness state by learning to accept current experiences and so on. So rather than changing thoughts or feelings themselves, ACT focuses on altering the relationship to these experiences, which is the main idea behind mindfulness. Mindfulness-based approaches don't try to change thoughts because thoughts, by nature, are transitory. They will come and go. You don't really have to struggle with it. You just have to find the right place within yourself so that they don't disturb you much. By nature, thoughts are changing all the time; you don't have to change them. So that is the main approach in mindfulness-based solutions to all the problems. This act is typically practiced in individual sessions rather than in groups.

The difference here is that most of the acts are very individualistic in nature. If you see the other two, more group sessions are preferred. Also, it includes six core processes that

foster psychological flexibility, which are divided into three main aspects. So, these processes are organized into three interconnected response styles. The first one is open or becoming open, which is part of psychological flexibility. The more open you are, the more flexible you are. This open has two important aspects. One is acceptance of what is in the present moment and there is something called diffusion, which we will be talking about. Then the next component is awareness. It includes present moment awareness, which is mostly about mindfulness and finding the self as a context, which we will be talking about. Then the third one is called "active" or "engaged" that includes things like finding values, committed actions, and so on. So let's see these three and their sub-aspects. So open includes acceptance, bringing experiences without attempting to alter them, especially when they bring psychological discomfort. And diffusion means viewing thoughts and languages as flexible and not inherently controlling. What does diffusion mean? You view thoughts and the language that we speak as flexible, and they cannot be directly controlled. They are flexible. You can change them in the way you want. Thoughts are also like that. So in a sense, you can use this technique of acceptance and diffusion to become more open. Second is awareness, or awareness that involves self as a context. It means understanding that the self exists independently of thoughts and experiences. So, one thing we need to understand here is that when we talk about the self in the context of mindfulness, the self is the foundation. And thoughts and other things are peripheral things that come and go. The self exists independently of thoughts and experiences. The present moment is about engaging fully with current experiences without judgment, which is mainly the mindfulness aspect of it. So this develops your awareness. You become much more aware in the present context, where you see yourself as a context. From the self, you see the experiences because they are different from you and the present moment, both gives you sense of awareness. The third component is active, which includes values that clarify life direction. We all have different value systems. Committed actions mean taking concrete steps aligned with values to achieve meaningful goals. Committed actions are about taking concrete steps to reach your goals, which align with your value systems. So, these three and each are divided into two more components, making a total of six components. These are all important for increasing psychological flexibility and psychological health. ACT tries to enhance all these aspects

to make people psychologically healthy and increase psychological flexibility. So, together these elements promote a balanced approach to life's experiences, fostering resilience, purposeful action, and overall psychological health, and so on. So, these are some of the things that are focused on in ACT. These are some of the things that are very important aspects of mindfulness.

We can see that mindfulness has a lot of practical implications, because of which they have been integrated into formal therapies. We also discussed flow as a state in this module, where we discussed that flow is a highly functional state where we function very effectively to the best of our capabilities and both this flow state and mindfulness are very interconnected in a sense from the applied perspective. Developing a mindful state, which is much easier to achieve, can also increase the possibility that we experience more flow state in what we do in our lives. So both of these concepts are practically significant from an applied perspective and have a lot of diverse applied implications. So we have discussed all these things in this module, and with this, I stop here. Thank you.