

# Cultivating Therapeutic Relationship Among Counselors-In-Training: Impact of Mindfulness



Barbara Brannon, Mackenzie Barrett, Sammie Lancaster, and Dr. Shengli Dong  
Department of Educational Psychology and Learning Systems, Florida State University

## Abstract

Therapeutic alliance has been identified as an essential factor in good therapeutic and treatment outcomes, although specific traits that lead to these benefits are still being examined. This research aims to analyze the impacts of using mindfulness techniques in counselors-in-training and how they influence the therapeutic alliance. Our comprehensive literature review analyses prior research on therapeutic alliance and mindfulness to investigate how mindfulness can impact the development, strength, and nature of the working alliance. Mindfulness techniques are rooted in Buddhist culture, and despite its longevity, the use of mindfulness-based intervention and tactics are fairly new for western clinical use. Research suggests further analysis of mindfulness techniques is warranted to gain a better understanding of its potential influences, specifically in the therapist-client relationship. The literature suggests that traits closely relating to mindfulness techniques such as empathy and awareness may have a positive impact on cultivating a better therapeutic alliance or relationship.

## Introduction

The relationship between therapists and clients is essential in therapy outcomes. Improving therapy outcomes for patients starts with improving the training of counselors. The integration of mindfulness techniques may assist this development. There is a strong correlation between the therapist-client relationship and positive treatment outcomes (Guest and Carlson, 2019, p. 429). The therapeutic relationship comprises the bond between the therapist and client; essentially, it is the quality of emotional interaction between the two (Walser & O'Connell, 2020, p. 430). It encapsulates the collaboration between the therapist and client on goals and tasks. Skills associated with better treatment outcomes and a stronger working alliance are commonly related to themes and ideas that stem from mindfulness. Some traits or skills associated with mindfulness include awareness, nonjudgement, self-regulation, empathy, and patience (Kabat-Zinn, 2019). This extensive literature review presents the opportunity to identify knowledge gaps and potential areas for further research. This literature review attempts to gain a comprehensive theoretical framework on mindfulness and therapeutic alliance, an operationalized definition of mindfulness, and to identify the knowledge gaps for further research inquiry.

## Methods

- Keywords Used: mindfulness, therapeutic alliance, psychology, working alliance, adolescent, teenager, mental illness and rapport.
- Literature search confined from the year 1990 to 2021.
- Created a preliminary excel spreadsheet of articles relevant to the study, including abstracts of each; divided among each team member.
- Created a secondary excel spreadsheet to examine relevant information from each article, including the research question/purpose, sample size, type of sample, research design, models/theories, findings, and limitations.
- Use annotations from articles and organize them into an outline analyzing definitions/constructs, theoretical framework, prior research, gaps in literature, conventional strategies for cultivating therapeutic alliance, and impacts of mindfulness in various populations.
- Created a combined collaborative outline of relevant information and summarized the findings.
- Relevant studies were highlighted in green and further summarized.

## Themes



## Discussion

Therapeutic alliance has been identified as an essential factor in positive therapeutic and treatment outcomes, although specific traits that lead to these benefits are still being examined. This research aims to analyze the impacts of using mindfulness techniques in counselors-in-training and how they influence the therapeutic alliance. We have found that research suggests further experimentation of mindfulness techniques is required in order to gain a better understanding of its potential influences, specifically in the therapist-client relationship. The list of extensions upon this research is extensive and will continue to be examined in the future.

## Results

Findings from this preliminary literature review enable identification of key themes in therapeutic alliance and mindfulness.

The themes present have either been identified in key literature or make the foundational understanding of therapeutic alliance and mindfulness. The list intends to portray factors closely related to mindfulness that positively influence the therapeutic alliance or relationship.

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